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Give the Gift of Literacy this Holiday Season

United Way launches Holiday Sponsorship Program for Imagination Library

In the spirit of the season, United Way serving St. Tammany launched a special Holiday Sponsorship Program, "Books for the Holidays," to raise money for the Imagination Library. A gift of only \$30 will sponsor a child for one year; a gift of \$150, five years.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, supported by United Way serving St. Tammany, is designed to give children an early start to their learning and development, providing age-appropriate books to encourage reading and language skills. The program is available to all children from birth to age five in St. Tammany. Since its launch, the Imagination Library has provided free books to more than 500 children on the Northshore.

"For me this program is important because it is never too early to introduce children to books," says United Way's Campaign Chairperson Gwen Wade, a retired St. Tammany Parish elementary school principal. "Books from the Imagination Library give parents the opportunity to read and spend quality time with their children. Reading helps young children develop critical thinking skills and prepares them for school."

Educators have emphasized the fact that reading with your preschool child is the single most important activity to prepare a child for school. Dolly Parton created her Imagination Library to guarantee access to books and to inspire parents to read to their children as much as possible. In Dolly's words, it's part of a lifelong dream for every child to have a library of books their parents can read to them from, from the time they're born to the time they start school. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library was launched in 1996 for preschoolers in Sevier County, Tennessee, as a gift of encouragement for the children of her Smoky Mountain homeland. Today the program is available in hundreds of communities across the United States and Canada.

Parents in participating communities can register their children from the day they are born. Once they're enrolled, children receive a new, age-appropriate book through the mail each month until their fifth birthday. All the books, from *The Little Engine that Could*TM to *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come!* are chosen by a committee of individuals from education, child development, academia, and early childhood literacy.

For more information, please contact Charlotte Champagne at 985.875.3026 or charlottec@unitedwaynola.org, or visit www.unitedwaynola.org/imaginationlibrary.

About United Way serving St. Tammany

United Way serving St. Tammany is a regional office of United Way for the Greater New Orleans Area. United Way is advancing the common good. By partnering with donors, employers, nonprofits, faith groups and government, United Way brings a coordinated approach to solving community problems in Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa and Washington Parishes. For more information, please call 504.822.5540 or visit www.unitedwaynola.org. You can find us at www.facebook.com/UnitedWayNola or follow us on twitter: @UnitedWayNola.

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