



## Press Release

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### **Free Book Program Launched in Mahoning County**

The United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning launched its new initiative, **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library**.

In partnership with Covelli Enterprises and with help from the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County, the United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley is able to make this early literacy program a reality.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is open to Mahoning County children **5 years old and younger**. After they register for the Imagination Library, the kids will receive a **FREE** age appropriate book once a month until their fifth birthday as long as they live in Mahoning County.

"Today more than ever we need to invest in our young children's future. The early years are the learning years and early investment matters to everyone." said Kathy Mock, Director of Education and Initiatives, United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley, "A child who has difficulty reading in third grade is less likely to catch up. The Imagination Library gives children the gift of literacy and the opportunity to be successful at a young age and beyond."

Parents or guardians can register online at [www.ymvunitedway.org](http://www.ymvunitedway.org) or pick up registration forms located at the United Way office, all branches of the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County, and various pre-schools and schools across Mahoning County. The books will then be sent directly to the child's home.

Covelli Enterprises recognizes the value in the Imagination Library, and is partnering with United Way to fund the program.

"We really wanted to help champion a program that will make an impact on the lives of children living right here in our community." said Sam Covelli, Owner, Covelli Enterprises, "The simple gift of a book can change the life of a child and we are looking forward to being a part of this special program in partnership with the United Way."

By starting the children as early as possible, the Imagination Library will form a solid foundation for these children as they progress through school. This will serve as an important tool as they try to achieve the third grade reading guarantee.

"As we move to the Community Impact Model here at the United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley, the Imagination Library falls under our Success by Six Initiative," said Bob Hannon, President, United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley, "We hope to focus on early childhood education so our children will be prepared well before they step foot into a classroom."

The United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley realizes to truly make an impact it's not enough to just get the books in the kids hands, but it's also important to help the adults in their lives capitalize on this opportunity. So United Way collaborated with the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County to create a Reading Buddy Program associated with the Imagination Library. This will allow parents and guardians an opportunity to help their children read.

"The Library is always excited when an opportunity arises to put books in the hands of children. It is our hope that the Imagination Library project will inspire children to come to the Library and where they can connect with even more books and enrich their lives." said Heidi Daniel, Executive Director, The Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County. " Since reading and literacy are at the foundation of what we do, it's only natural that we would be pleased at the opportunity to be a partner in United Way's Imagination Library project."

The Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County will facilitate the Reading Buddy program. More information and dates for the Reading Buddy Program will be available soon.