



MEDIA RELEASE

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DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY LAUNCHES IN BEAUDESERT

Beaudesert families are being inspired to encourage reading from an early age, thanks to this month's launch of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

A unique book-gifting program that sees registered children from birth to age five receive— free of charge — a high-quality, age-appropriate book in the mail each month, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a global initiative designed to stir a love of reading in the hearts of children everywhere.

Born during 1995 in the Country Music superstar's hometown of Tennessee, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library first began in Australia in 2014, when United Way Australia (UWA) collaborated with Dolly Parton's organisation to make Australia the fourth nation and third continent to offer the literacy-focused charitable program.

The result of generous funding granted to UWA by *The Courier Mail Children's Fund*, The Benevolent Society's Early Years Centre is now working in close partnership with the Queensland office of UWA to facilitate the Imagination Library in Beaudesert.

"The relationship between UWA and the Southeast Brisbane offices of The Benevolent Society actually dates back to 2013 when The Benevolent Society's Acacia Ridge Early Years Centre was a major community partner involved in bringing Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to Acacia Ridge," explains Marisa Phillips, The Benevolent Society's Manager – Child and Family Services.

"We're thrilled to again join forces with UWA to further expand reach of this hugely significant program and bring the benefits of early years literacy to the children and families of Beaudesert," adds Ms Phillips.

According to a 2015 study entitled *Dropping off the Edge*, Beaudesert is considered an area of disadvantage, where one in three children start school developmentally vulnerable.

"We must intervene early to improve outcomes for vulnerable children in Beaudesert because children who start behind stay behind," says Dr Marcus Curcija, UWA – Queensland State Manager.

"Reliable studies indicate reading proficiency in primary school is a strong indicator of high school dropout, with children not reading proficiently by Grade Four more likely to drop-out before graduating.

"Initiatives such as Dolly Parton's Imagination Library lend a helping hand to parents who are encouraged to read to their children from an early age to ultimately benefit future learning and life outcomes for their children," adds Dr Curcija.

Under the management of UWA, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has reached more than 10,000 children, with more than 235,000 books distributed to Australian family homes.

UWA's Dolly Parton Imagination Library national projects 2018 Half Yearly – Year on Year Comparison Survey of 181 parents with one or more children enrolled in the program showed:



- More than 70 per cent of parents or carers stated books and tip sheets through the program had an influence on the frequency and/or amount of time spent reading with their child/children.
- More than 70 per cent said the program had an influence on their confidence and ability to read to their children and 30 per cent said one of the main benefits of the program was bonding with their child/ increased quality time spent together.

For more information and to register to participate in the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program, phone The Benevolent Society's Beaudesert Early Years Centre on 07-5540-1500 or visit the United Way Australia website: <https://unitedway.com.au/learning/get-involved/dpil-home>.

Local businesses are welcome to contact UWA for tax-deductible fundraising opportunities to see Dolly Parton's Imagination Library grow in Australia.

FOR ALL MEDIA ENQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:

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About The Benevolent Society - Australia's first charity, working as a catalyst for social justice and change for over 200 years. Founded in 1813, The Benevolent Society advocates for a better life for all Australians, and provides in-home services for older Australians, and people with disability, as well as providing programs in Family support and early intervention. We help people age well and live their best lives, staying in their homes wherever possible. For more information, please visit benevolent.org.au, on Facebook/thebenevolentsociety or on Twitter - @BenevolentAU