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United Way of Greater
Toledo, Serving Lucas
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Wood County Represented at Dolly Parton Imagination Library Event in Columbus

[AUGUST 9, 2022, WOOD COUNTY, OH] – Country music sensation Dolly Parton took the stage in Columbus, OH today, not to perform, but to promote her other passion, inspiring children to read. Parton was the guest of Ohio First Lady, Fran DeWine, in her effort to promote Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL). Governor Mike DeWine declared August 9 *Dolly Parton Day* in Ohio in light of the star's visit.

Inspired by her own father's inability to read, Parton started her Imagination Library in 1995. Today, it spans five countries and gifts over 1 million books free each month. Ohio's Imagination Library began in 2019 and distributes more than 327,000 books monthly to all kids from birth to age five.

The First Lady's Charitable Foundation hosted the luncheon, which was closed to the public, to raise financial support and awareness for the Ohio Program. The event took place at Ohio Union in the Archie Griffin Ballroom, 1739 N. High Street, Columbus, OH. Currently, 48% of eligible children in Ohio receive books through DPIL. The goal of today's event was to raise that mark to 50%.

United Way of Greater Toledo's Wood County has been a proponent of DPIL since the beginning. Wood County was represented at today's luncheon by Maria Simon, youth services coordinator for Wood County District Public Library, also an Advisory Board Member for United Way in Wood County. "Dolly was amazing to see in person," she said, "Down to earth, funny, and very inspiring."

Erin Hachtel, area director for United Way in Wood County, is proud to have already reached the milestone at the center of this afternoon's message with 3,586 Wood County children enrolled. "United Way in Wood County is proud to serve as the local affiliate for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Ohio. As of August 1, Wood County has enrolled over 50% of our eligible children thanks to incredible support and outreach of our WoodLink libraries and Wood County Hospital. This program is a key piece of our early childhood education investment in the county," she said.

Culminating the luncheon, Ms. Parton and the First Lady were gifted quilts featuring squares created by participating youth in each Ohio county, including Wood (see attached images).

All Ohioans are encouraged to register children to receive Imagination Library books. Register and learn more about the program at www.unitedwaytoledo.org/wood-county and ohioimaginationlibrary.org.

We believe in uniting the caring power of people to improve lives. United Way of Greater Toledo brings a worldwide network into neighborhoods throughout Northwest Ohio. Proudly serving residents of Lucas, Ottawa, and Wood Counties, since 1918 we have believed that we all benefit from each other's success. As one of the longest-serving charitable organizations in our region, we are trusted, innovative, collaborative and accountable. Most importantly, your contributions serve neighbors right here at home.

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