

Wood County Imagination Library 2022 Annual Report

Prepared by United Way in Wood County

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Introduction


Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) is a book gifting program started in 1995 in Tennessee that mails free, high-quality books to children from birth to age five, no matter their family's income.ⁱ In 2019, Ohio First Lady Fran DeWine founded a companion program in Ohio called the Ohio Governor's Imagination Library with funding from the Ohio General Assembly and additional support from local affiliates who provide both financial resources and enrollment outreach. In 2022, this was rebranded with the name Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Ohio (DPIL-OH) to better align with other state and national Imagination Library program names.

United Way of Greater Toledo, serving Wood, Lucas, and Ottawa counties in Northwest Ohio invests in programs that support education, health, housing, and financial stability. Within our education investment, early childhood literacy has been identified as a key component to kindergarten readiness and successful educational attainment. Three out of eight school districts in the county scored "needs support to meet state standards in early literacy"ⁱⁱ Research shows that "having as few as 20 books in the home still has a significant impact on propelling a child to a higher level of education, and the more books you add, the greater the benefit."ⁱⁱⁱ As we continue to track educational outcomes in the wake of learning loss during COVID-19 disruptions, we believe that Imagination Library will help our kids be on track for kindergarten and later school success.

United Way in Wood County became a local affiliate of Imagination Library in March 2020 and began sending books in May 2020. Since that time, we've grown to active enrollment to nearly 3,800 children and 1,751 program graduates. The program provides each child a chance to build their own personal library and experience excitement as they explore their new book each month. One parent wrote, "We have really enjoyed this program and it has been a great way to bring excitement to our little one each month and bring her the excitement of books! We have also enjoyed her eyes light up when she realizes the book was for HER in the mail." "

What Wood County families are saying about Imagination Library...

' We have really enjoyed this program and it has been a great way to bring excitement to our little one each month and bring her the excitement of books! We have also enjoyed her eyes light up when she realizes the book was for HER in the mail :) '



United Way in Wood County provides the Imagination Library FREE to children ages birth to five in Wood County thanks in part to financial support from: Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio; Exchange Club of Bowling Green; Friends of Pemberville Public Library; North Baltimore Public Library; Rossford Public Library; Way Public Library and Way Public Library Foundation; Wayne Public Library; Weston Public Library; Wood County District Public Library; and individual gifts from people in our communities!

Enroll: ohioimaginationlibrary.org/enroll
Donate: tinyurl.com/GivemaginationLibraryWoodCo





Figure 1. Family Quote from 2022 Survey

In 2022, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Wood County was made possible by financial support from Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio; Dollywood Foundation; Exchange Club of Bowling Green; Friends of

Pemberville Public Library; North Baltimore Public Library; Rossford Public Library; Way Public Library and Way Public Library Foundation; Wayne Public Library; Weston Public Library; Wood County District Public Library; and individual gifts from people in our communities through the annual United Way campaign.

Enrollment

Trends

From January through December 2022, the number of children enrolled across Wood County increased from 3,050 to 3,789.

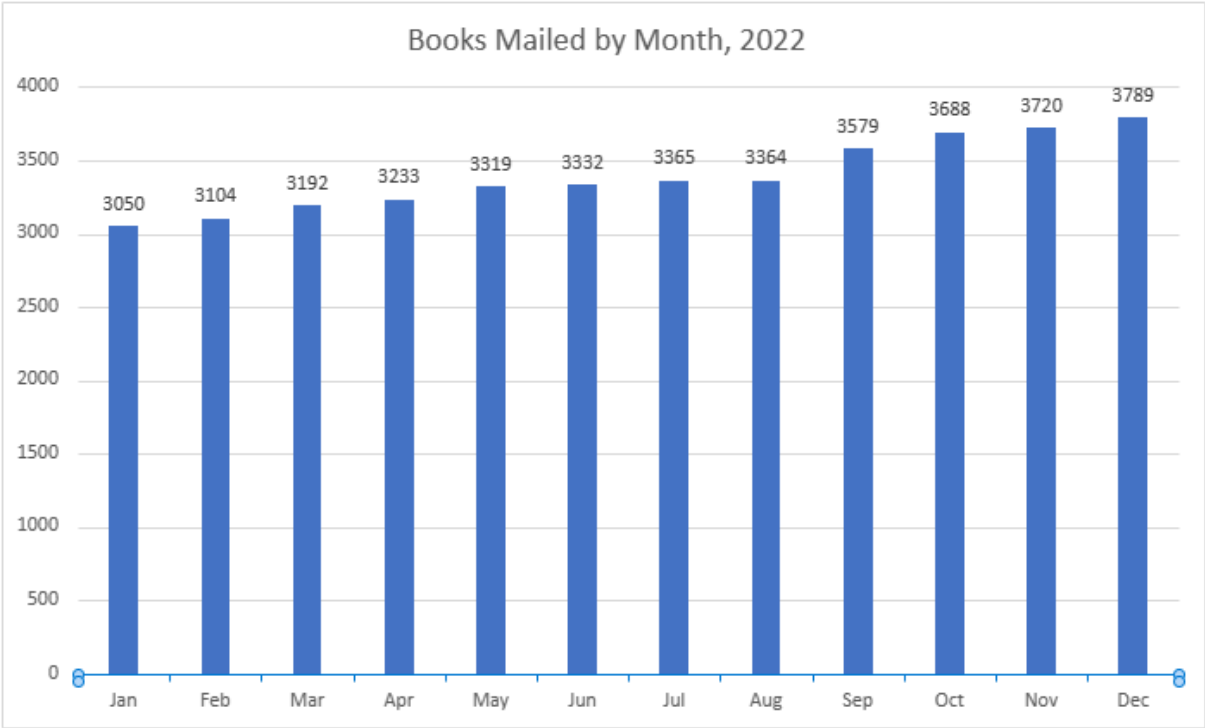


Figure 2. Enrollment January-December 2022

By the end of the calendar year, the program had achieved 55% enrollment of eligible children in the county. This number of children ages birth to five years old, 6,847, was determined at program start using Ohio Census data from 2010. As of this writing, DPIL and DPIL-OH have not shifted to using child data from the 2020 Census to determine enrollment percentages.

Hundreds of children also “graduated” from the program throughout the course of 2022. These are children who turned five years old while enrolled; upon their fifth birthday, the DPIL Book Order System converts their status to graduate and sends them a special book to mark this milestone. Table 1 lists the number of children in each location who aged out of the program during 2022, by location in the county.

Growing the program at this pace has only been possible through active community support, particularly through our library systems throughout the county.



Table 1. Number of Graduates by Location, 2022

Location	Number of Graduates
BLOOMDALE	5
BOWLING GREEN	153
BRADNER	14
CUSTAR	6
CYGNET	8
DUNBRIDGE	2
FOSTORIA	15
GENOA	1
GRAND RAPIDS	8
HASKINS	11
HOYTVILLE	1
JERRY CITY	2
LUCKEY	8
MILLBURY	26
MILTON CENTER	1
N BALTIMORE	3
NORTH BALTIMORE	31
NORTHWOOD	56
PEMBERVILLE	18
PERRYSBURG	271
PORTAGE	10
RISINGSUN	5
ROSSFORD	38
RUDOLPH	9
TONTOGANY	2
WALBRIDGE	25
WAYNE	19
WESTON	19
Grand Total	767

From program inception to date, over 1,600 Wood County children have graduated from Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Ohio.

Outreach

United Way in Wood County conducted various activities throughout 2022 to increase outreach to families and enrollment of children in Wood County.

The summer months brought multiple opportunities to meet families at Farmers' Markets and Street Fairs. United Way staff and volunteers were present two times each at Rossford, Perrysburg, and Bowling Green markets. The display included a child-sized table and chairs with an art activity for young children.





Figure 3. Outreach table at Rossford, Summer 2022

Our parent survey noted friends and family and social media as the most common way families learned about the Imagination Library program in Wood County. We created and shared regular posts like Figure 4 about Imagination Library on our Facebook and Instagram pages to make it easy for people to share and encourage others to share..

What Wood County families are saying about Imagination Library...



"My grandson loves going to the mailbox to receive his book. The books provide wonderful stories for our whole family to enjoy! Thank you for providing children with this wonderful program. It's a great way to improve literacy around the country/world!"

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Enroll: ohioimaginationlibrary.org/enroll
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Figure 4. Social Media Post, 2022

We continued to leverage our local partnerships with child-serving agencies in the Early Childhood Task Force to share enrollment information. They hosted three informational and activity tables at the Firefly Nights festival in Bowling Green and included our flyer in goody bags handed out to families with young children. The Monday after the July event, 119 new registration requests were received; however with many children aging out of the program that month, enrollment remained relatively flat.

In June 2021, the Ohio Governor's Imagination Library asked each affiliate in the state to produce county-themed Quilt Squares, designed and decorated by children. We partnered with the children at the summer reading program at the Wood County District Public Library in Bowling Green to complete our squares, pictured below. The pieces were joined into two matching quilts to gift to Fran DeWine and Dolly Parton, who visited Ohio in August 2022 to celebrate the accomplishment of establishing an affiliate in each county in the state.



Figure 5. Wood County Completed Quilt Square Design, 2021

On August 9, 2022, the completed quilts were presented during a visit by Dolly Parton to Ohio. Local affiliates were invited to attend a celebration on August 9, now proclaimed by Governor Mike DeWine as “Dolly Parton Day in Ohio”; this invitation was extended to all library directors in Wood County. Maria Simon, Director of Youth Services at the Wood County District Public Library was able to attend the event and shared her experience with local media¹



Figure 6. Dolly Parton (right) with First Lady Fran DeWine (left). The quilt presented to Parton is on display at the right. (Image provided)

¹ [Local librarian dazzled by Dolly Parton's passion for giving kids a head start in reading – BG Independent News \(bgindependentmedia.org\)](https://bgindependentmedia.org/)



Wood County welcomed Fran DeWine in October 2022 to Imaginative Beginnings Early Learning Center for a book reading. She toured the center, which offers early childhood programming, and read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Wood County library representatives from several locations as well as Great Lakes Community Action Partnership Head Start leaders attended.

Figure 7. Fran DeWine accepts signed welcome poster from child at Imaginative Beginnings, October 2022. Image courtesy Erin Hachtel, United Way.

Research

National and State-Level Findings

A report^{iv} published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in 2012 indicates that children who cannot read proficiently in the third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school prior to graduating. Studies suggest DPIL is “positively and significantly associated with higher measures of early language and math development. This association

remains after controlling for demographic and socioeconomic factors, pre-kindergarten educational experience, and family reading habits.”^v

Several Ohio counties and affiliates have also shared results^{vi} from their research. In Hamilton County:

Cincinnati Children’s Hospital, in partnership with Cincinnati Public Schools and Reach Out and Read, partnered together in 2015 to increase the number of books children have in the home by providing access to Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library.

Among kindergarten classes at Cincinnati Public Schools, Kindergarten Readiness Assessments rose by 15.4% among kids who participated in the program for only three years. Scores rose from 42.9% in the 2016-2017 incoming kindergarten class to 58.3% in the 2018-2019 incoming kindergarten class.^{vii}

Wood County Caregiver Survey

We sent a survey to enrolled families that asked the same questions as our initial survey in 2021 to track trends in family responses. We received 150 responses. Key findings are presented below, and additional data is included in the Appendix. Well over half (60%) of parents reported reading more than once per day to their children, with a total of 88% reporting reading at least once per day. This compares to 83% reporting they read these amounts in 2021.

How often do you read to your child?

150 responses

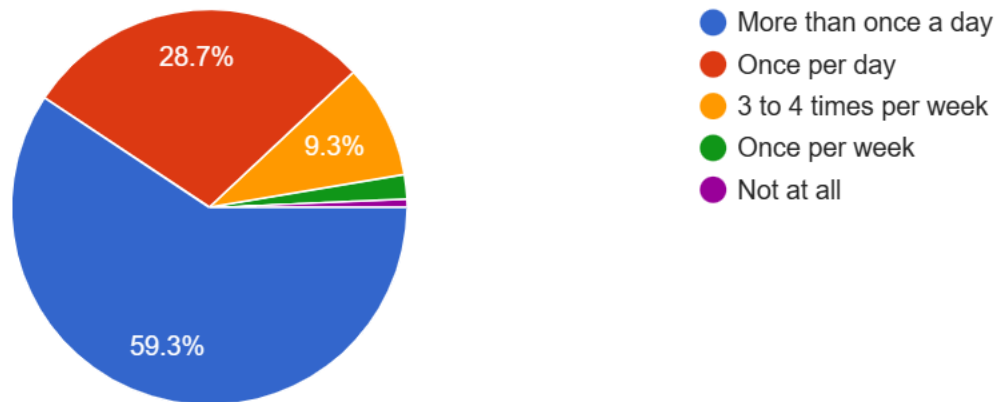


Figure 8. Survey - Reading Frequency, 2022

As we observed in 2021, most families strongly agree or agree that their children are expressing more interest in reading; that their overall time reading with their children has increased; and that the program is engaging for the whole family. The figure below shows the perceived impact of program participation. Tables 2-4 provide breakdowns of each response.

Please tell us about your experience with Imagination Library; rate your level of agreement with the following statements.

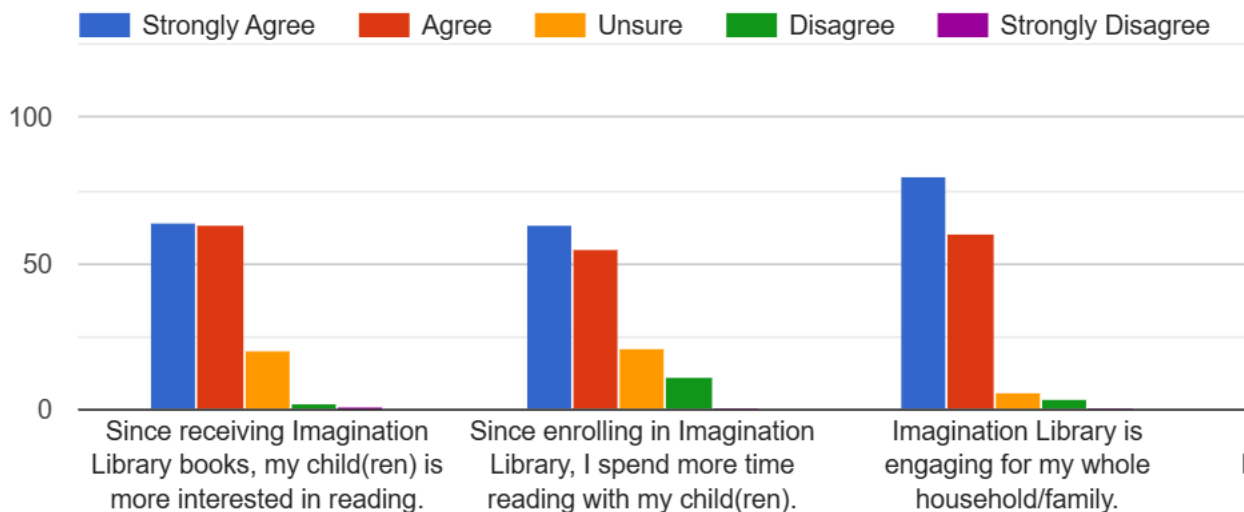


Figure 9. Survey - Reading Interest and Engagement, 2022



Table 2. Responses - Interest in Reading, 2022

Since receiving Imagination Library books, my child(ren) is more interested in reading. n=150	Count	Percent
Strongly Agree	64	43%
Agree	63	42%
Unsure	20	13%
Disagree	2	1%
Strongly Disagree	1	1%
Grand Total	150	100%

Table 3. Responses - Time Spent Reading, 2022

Since enrolling in Imagination Library, I spend more time reading with my child(ren). n=150	Count	Percent
Strongly Agree	63	42%
Agree	55	37%
Disagree	11	7%
Unsure	21	14%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Grand Total	150	100%

Table 4. Responses - Family Engagement, 2022

Imagination Library is engaging for my whole household/ family. n=150	Count	Percent
Strongly Agree	80	53%
Agree	60	40%
Unsure	6	4%
Disagree	4	3%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Grand Total	150	100%

Finally, respondents whose children had graduated shared that they observed clear benefits from the program including increased vocabulary (89% of responses), improved listening (78% of responses), and increased social skills (55% of responses).

Table 5. Benefits Observed, 2022

Where have you seen your child benefit due to this program? (Check all that apply) n=74	Count	Percent
Increased vocabulary	66	89.2%
Improved listening	58	78.4%
Increased social skills	41	55.4%

With two years of this qualitative data captured, annual surveys will continue to track these trends.



Program Cost and Funding

The cost to provide books to one child for one year is approximately \$25. Each month that the program grows, the cost to provide it grows. At the end of December 2022, the monthly cost to mail books to nearly 3,800 children enrolled was \$8,069.64. Beginning in 2023, the cost will increase to \$26. We are also required by the program parameters to use MailChimp for communication with parents and must plan for a monthly cost to retain that service.

As the local affiliate, United Way in Wood County is responsible for raising funds to provide DPIL-OH. In 2022, this funding came through individual and corporate donations, local grants from community organizations, donations via the Dollywood Foundation, financial support from all library systems in Wood County (WoodLink Libraries and/or their Friends or Foundations^{viii}), and a 50% funding match grant from the state-level organization based on enrollment which is funded from the state budget. The breakdown of cost share is described in Figure 10.

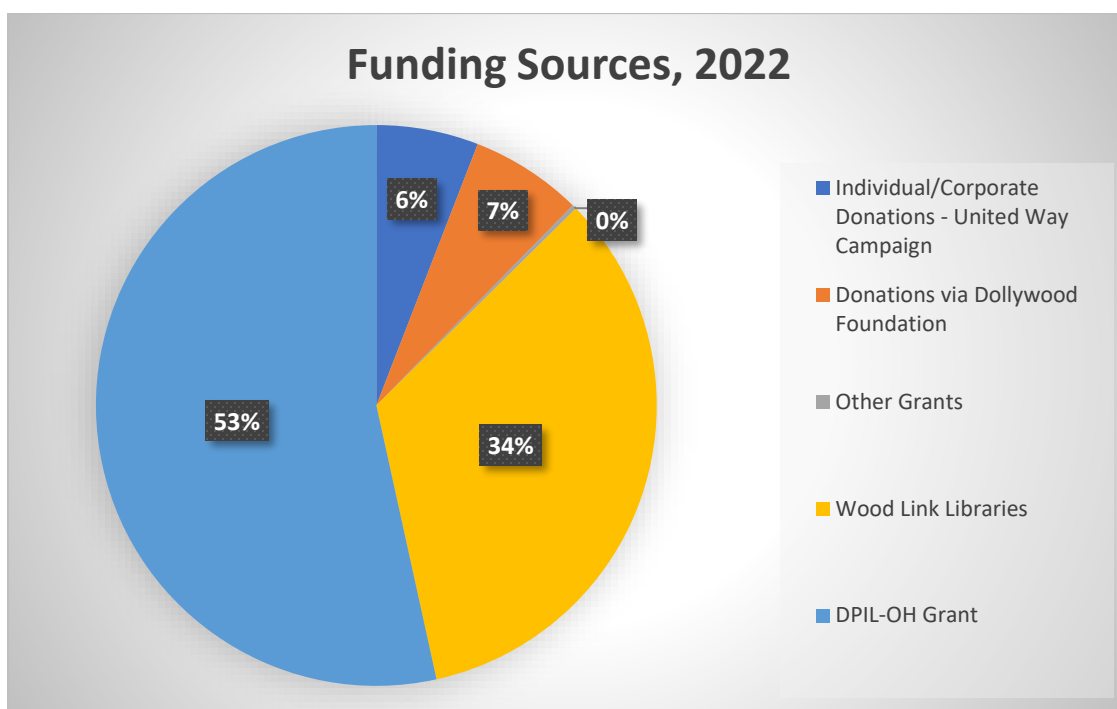


Figure 10. Funding Sources, 2022

Compared with fundraising in the prior year, as shown in Table 6, we increased individual and corporate gifts. Thanks to fundraising at the state level by Mrs. DeWine and the DPIL-OH team, affiliate book costs were 100% covered for the first three months of the year.

Table 6. Sources of Income 2022 and 2021

Source	2022	2021
Individual/Corporate Donations - United Way Campaign	6%	1%
Donations via Dollywood Foundation	7%	-
Other Grants	>1%	5%
Wood Link Libraries	34%	46%
DPIL-OH Grant	53%	48%



Future


The primary consideration to the successful continuation of this popular and critical early literacy program is sustainable funding. While there is clearly support for continuing to allocate state dollars from the Governor's office, it cannot be taken for granted that the legislature will agree and act accordingly. The state budget will continue to provide 50% grant match funding from the State of Ohio biennial budget through the end of FY 2023, but beyond that, it is uncertain. As in 2022, the goal for Wood County's Imagination Library in 2023 is to further diversify program funding by reaching new individual and/or corporate sponsors and securing additional grant funding while maintaining library funding.

However, we know that state funding for local libraries, that has formed a critical part of our operational budget since program inception, is also not guaranteed. The Advisory Board of United Way in Wood County under the guidance of the Area Director is developing a long-term management plan for this important program to include a sustainable funding mechanism.

It is also important to continue to research national, state, and local kindergarten readiness data and survey caregivers of Wood County's DPIL recipients to ensure this program is more than a book giveaway. Demonstrating that DPIL is preparing children for success in life – both academically and social-emotionally – not only will have desired positive impacts on education outcomes, but it will also put the program in a position of strength to receive grant funding or other investments from philanthropic foundations.

Imagination Library can be a vital part of preparing our kids to succeed, and our community to flourish. We remain optimistic that funders and supporters will join us in ensuring it can continue.

What Wood County families are saying about Imagination Library...



"We absolutely love this program - such a gift to the community. Our kids get so excited any time they receive a 'book from Dolly!'"

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Donate: tinyurl.com/GiveImaginationLibraryWoodCo





Figure 11. Family Quote, 2022



Appendix: Survey Responses, 2022

How did you learn about Imagination Library?

N=150

Method	Count
Friend or Family Member	73
Social Media	46
Library	12
Daycare/Preschool	7
Doctor's Office	3
Hospital	2
Dolly Parton Biography	1
Early intervention	1
I believe it was on the news	1
Newspaper	1
Radio	1
United Way of Greater Toledo	1
Work	1

How many children's books do you have in the home?

N=150

How many children's books do you have in the home?	
11 or more	143
6-10	5
1-5	2
Grand Total	150

Do you or a member of your household have a library card?

N=150

Do you or a member of your household have a library card?	
No	20
Yes	130
Grand Total	150



What is your city of residence?²

N=148

Location	Count
Bloomdale	1
Bowling Green	32
Bradner	4
Curtice	1
Custar	1
Cygnets	4
Dunbridge	1
Dundee	1
Fremont	1
Haskins	2
Haskins	1
Lakeside Marblehead	1
Luckey	1
Millbury	3
North Baltimore	3
Northwood	7
Oregon	2
Pemberville	4
Perrysburg	58
Portage	1
Rosford	5
Van Wert	1
Walbridge	3
Washington Courthouse	1
Wayne	4
West Millgrove	1
Weston	3
Woodville	1

How often do you read to your child?

N= 150

How often do you read to your child?	Count	Percent
More than once a day	89	59%
Once per day	43	29%
3 to 4 times per week	14	9%
Once per week	3	2%
Not at all	1	1%
Grand Total	150	100%

² Note this survey went to all families on our MailChimp list. This would include graduate families who have since moved to another area, accounting for responses outside of Wood County. Due to DPIL rules, we are unable to remove families from our mailing list; they must opt-out of communications.



Current families:

Where do you hope your child will benefit due to this program? (Check all that apply and/or add a comment)

N=176

Benefits hoped	Count
Increased vocabulary	165
Improved listening	160
Increased social skills	121
Lifelong love of reading, getting excited about reading	5
Perspective building, exposure to diverse characters, understanding of people from diverse backgrounds	3
We love the surprise, and the kids think it's really cool, when they get mail!	4
We love the selection of stories, and hope it increases cultural awareness in our kids.	1
We love that the books sent are sometimes books we wouldn't otherwise recognize or wouldn't buy.	1
Increased reading comprehension	1
Increased attention	1
Increased appreciation for literature	1
Improved reading	1
Imagination	1
Building self-esteem by owning his own library	1
Academic success	1

Past Participants:

Where have you seen your child benefit due to this program? (Check all that apply and/or add a comment)

N=72

Benefits observed	Count
Improved listening	59
Increased vocabulary	52
Increased social skills	30
Love for books and reading and learning	3
Learning to read on her own!	1
Seeing characters and hearing stories outside of their own culture and experiences	1
Actually wanting to be read to	1
Just the joy in receiving a different book	1
Interest in other books	1



Endnotes

ⁱ <https://imaginationlibrary.com/about-us/>

ⁱⁱ <https://reportcard.education.ohio.gov/>

ⁱⁱⁱ University of Nevada, Reno. "Books in home as important as parents' education in determining children's education level." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 21 May 2010.

^{iv} Hernandez, Donald. "Double Jeopardy Overview: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation" Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2012. Retrieved from <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-DoubleJeopardy-2012-Full.pdf>

^v DPIL Shelby County Tennessee. "Evaluating the relationship between the Imagination Library early childhood literacy program and kindergarten readiness." 12 February 2013. Retrieved from [TN Shelby County - DPIL SCBFB Final Paper.pdf](#)

^{vi} Ohio Imagination Library [Early Literacy Matters — Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio \(ohioimaginationlibrary.org\)](#)

^{vii} INNOVATIONS in Community Research and Program Evaluation at Children's Hospital Medical Center. "Collaborative Efforts to Improve School Readiness and Literacy in Cincinnati." January 2019. Retrieved online from [Cincinnati+Kindergarten+Readiness+Assessment+Data.pdf \(squarespace.com\)](#)

^{viii} North Baltimore Public Library; Friends of Pemberville Public Library; Rossford Public Library; Way Public Library and Way Public Library Foundation; Wayne Public Library; Weston Public Library; and Wood County District Public Library

