

2023 LEGISLATIVE REPORT



Produced by:
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Powered by United Ways of the Pacific Northwest
in partnership with The Dollywood Foundation

State Agency Leads:
WA Department of Children, Youth, & Families
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

WITH GRATITUDE

What a ride this has been! To be able to take part in uplifting a world-class early literacy program in Washington for our youngest residents has been one of the greatest honors and joys of my life.

This could not have been achieved without the extraordinary buy-in, collaboration, drive, and commitment of so many groups and individuals across the state. This program will be able to stand the test of time with a united approach to create a better start, and a better future for our children.

Our team is so grateful for the extraordinary collaboration and support of our Governor, legislators, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, WA State Department of Children, Youth & Families, local program partners, and community members for helping Dolly's dream come to life in Washington.

Brooke Fisher-Clark



2023 GOALS

2023 was the steep uphill climb portion of the journey with many tasks and challenges to face in order to reach the top of the mountain. Six specific goals drew the Imagination Library of Washington (ILWA) teams focus as mentioned below:

- 1) Complete statewide coverage of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, providing access to all state early learners.
- 2) Amplify program awareness through strategic marketing activities with emphasis on high needs regions of the state, ensuring all families with children ages 0-5 can discover the program.
- 3) Elevate local program partner support.
- 4) Build collaborative partnerships to enhance the Imagination Library at the statewide and local level.
- 5) Produce an honorable, high-quality statewide celebration with special guest, Dolly Parton.
- 6) Increase child enrollments.



EXPANSION

The year started with two counties having no program coverage, seven with partial coverage, meaning there was program availability in various areas but not all, and 30 counties with full program service.

The ILWA team plotted out a route to victory by customizing their approach to each county and their make-up. Some were able to uplift the program with one added local program partner, and others needed a team approach, bringing on multiple new local program partners. Some regions needed funding resources in order to commit, which the ILWA team assisted with.

An emphasis was still placed in trying to uplift program service to the highest needs regions first if possible. Through the trek, the ILWA team recruited nine new local program partners, both 501c3 nonprofits and school districts (which are entities allowed to become program partners), and elevated program service in the remaining regions of nine counties.

The expansion completion finish line was crossed in mid-July 2023, with a statewide team of 46 local program partners, and 39 counties fully covered, providing Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program access to all 450,000 early learners who reside in Washington State. Washington is the seventh state to coordinate and host a statewide celebration featuring Dolly Parton to celebrate statewide coverage completion, along with Tennessee, West Virginia, Ohio, Delaware, Arkansas and Kansas.

The reality of completing statewide program coverage would not have come to fruition without the 50% monthly program partner funding match from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction's ESSER funds, designated to the program's expansion. This was the main recruitment tool that enabled the ILWA team to secure local program partners and additional community funding partners to complete the state. These funds were critical in ensuring program existence and sustainability. \$2 million was also approved in the state's operating budget for the biennium to continue the 50% local program partner match after the OSPI contract expired, however, the award will not cover the projected enrollment costs for the two-year span, which will cause significant program strain such as waiting lists and possible countywide program pauses if there is a state funding shortfall.





PROMOTION

It was a busy year for the Director of Marketing at ILWA, Angela French, who juggled many tasks including creating custom marketing materials for local program partners, lining up and boosting a year of rich and compelling content for the ILWA social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram) to engage supporters, build program awareness, and increase child enrollment.


One of the largest tasks at-hand was developing a portfolio of content and program engagement collateral, from press releases, to blogs, newsletters, and posters designed to gain optimal engagement for the August 15th statewide celebration featuring American Icon Dolly Parton. This highly visible event also included an exclusive, one-on-one King 5 interview with Dolly herself highlighting the Imagination Library ([click here](#) to watch the interview), as well as generated new enrollments and support with the news of statewide coverage completion occurring mid-summer.

The news of Dolly's visit to Washington garnered immense support from statewide media that resulted in numerous newspaper articles, editorials ([click here](#) to see this editorial from The Seattle Times), live news features, radio announcements, and social media attention that led to increased page likes, followers, and shares on ILWA social platforms. With high media attention on the statewide celebration and the live event broadcast by TVW, ILWA and local program partners saw an incredible uptick in registrations, nearly topping 30,000 new children enrolled in one month's time. Typical monthly enrollment growth ranges from 2,000 to 3,000.

Dolly's inspiration behind creating the Imagination library in 1995 was her father's inability to read and write.

"My daddy's looking down; we did it! We did it," Dolly Parton told the crowd at the Pantages Theatre on August 15. "He got a real kick about people calling me the book lady and not the country star. He took such pride in it. Daddy was really smart and he helped me a lot. He had great ideas," said Parton.

IMAGINATION LIBRARY OF WASHINGTON PRESENTS




Statewide Celebration

Featuring American Icon **DOLLY PARTON**

TUESDAY
August 15, 2023
2:30PM

PANTAGES THEATER
Tacoma, WA



imaginationlibrarywashington.org



LOCAL PROGRAM SUPPORT



Imagination Library of Washington is made up of 46 strong, passionate local program partners who provide program service to their region's children, allowing them the opportunity to build their own home library and develop a love of reading and learning in the earliest years of life.

They represent multiple entities such as service clubs, education foundations, school districts, land trusts, and human service organizations, each having the best interest of our youngest children at heart and choosing to invest in their future.

The ILWA team has hosted bi-annual forums to connect and network with local partners, share best practices, and synergize together. One-on-one local partner support has been provided along the way to develop custom marketing materials, provide technical support, and create funding partnerships to support local regions.

The 2023 ILWA Local Program Partner Satisfaction Survey revealed that 99.7% of local partners find value in having a statewide Imagination Library program and team, and 94.2% were extremely satisfied with the support they receive from ILWA.



Building Collaborative Partnerships

A FRIENDRAISING JOURNEY



The key to the Imagination Library's success is not just providing enrollment opportunities to all early learners from birth to age five, but in developing strong, collaborative partnerships with entities that can bring additional access, educational enrichment, funding, creativity, and program performance measurement abilities. This is the WD-40 that comprehensively connects a statewide Imagination Library program to its stakeholders, allowing it to grow and remain effective and impactful.

Service clubs and United Ways have been valuable partners in both becoming program service providers and funders to support children in local areas across the state.



Another collaborative partnership is with Little Free Library (LFL), whose mission of expanding book access for all aligns with the work of ILWA, inspiring a love of reading and ensuring equitable access to books. Through this program partnership, LFL stewards can opt-in to engage with ILWA and provide Imagination Library enrollment information at their own libraries. LFL Stewards now have the ability to download a digital toolkit containing promotional materials and signage identifying their library as an ILWA Literacy Partner. LFL Stewards also now have the opportunity to engage with ILWA local program partners to repurpose Imagination Library within local Little Free Libraries. Phase two of the partnership expands book access for kids by placing LFL's in book deserts throughout our state.



Other partnerships include teaming up with the WA State Dept. of Corrections, where Imagination Library book displays are being installed in state correctional facility visit area for families and children, filling a niche in serving children of incarcerated family members throughout the state.

The ILWA team has also connected with Alliance CaRES, providing program information to kinship care and foster families. ILWA also has a strong partnership with the Timberland Regional Library system, where program information is infused within their 29 local libraries in five counties to further children's abilities to obtain books.



A Statewide Celebration

An Inspiring Day in Washington

“NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jay Inslee, governor of the state of Washington, do hereby proclaim, August 15, 2023, as Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library Day in Washington, and I urge all people in our state to join me in this special observance.”

-Excerpt from official state proclamation



August 15th was a momentous day for Imagination Library of Washington, lawmakers, state leaders, local program partners, volunteers, supporters, and early learner families, as a statewide celebration took place at The Pantages Theater in Tacoma to honor and recognize the achievement of completing full coverage of Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library throughout Washington. This program became available to all early learners ages birth to five in late July 2023, prompting the coordination of this spectacular event, which welcomed and hosted Dolly Parton herself to give thanks to all who participated in bringing her dream of providing books to more children to life in Washington.

The program kicked off with words of support for early literacy and the Imagination Library via video from University of Washington President, Ana Mari Cauce, followed by a burst of excitement and beats with the University of Washington drumline performing as a treat for Dolly, who was a former member of her Tennessee high school’s drumline. The event featured emcee and Executive Director of Imagination Library of Washington, Brooke Fisher-Clark (escorted to the stage by her son, and graduate of the Imagination Library program) expressing gratitude and appreciation of an extraordinary collective effort that brought this program to life in Washington. Other presenters included, HB 2068 Champions, Representatives Monica Stonier, and Peter Abbarno, who helped make Washington the first legislatively recognized statewide

program on the west coast. Tacoma Youth Symphony, a group of exceptional musicians took the stage with two masterful performances of Dolly Parton songs, “I Will Always Love You,” and “9 to 5,” and Washington State Lieutenant Governor Denny Heck graciously welcomed Dolly to the stage in a fun dialogue and gift exchange. Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal had the honor of conducting a fireside chat with Dolly, which drew out her inspiration and drive for developing this world-class, number one early literacy program. Dolly shared some words of wisdom on kindness, then took to the front of the stage with her rhinestone-encrusted guitar for a live performance of “Coat of Many Colors,” a song about her childhood, and “Try,” the theme song for Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library.

The program ended by showcasing the Imagination Library of Washington video ([click here](#) to watch), followed by a call to action encouraging continued funding support of the program by speaker, John Paul, former President of the Association of Washington Broadcasters.

[Click here to watch the Imagination Library of Washington Celebration broadcast thanks to TVW!](#)



Enrollment

A big milestone was achieved in Fall 2023, as ILWA and local program partners reached 100,000 enrolled children due to a new enrollment surge of nearly 30,000 registrations in a month's time. This spike in registrations was a result of the major media attention and engagement surrounding the program and Dolly Parton's visit to WA for the statewide celebration in August. Over 61,000 new enrollments were garnered in 2023 to-date, and 676,000 books were mailed to Washington children. Below is the list of current children enrolled by county who will receive Imagination Library books in November 2023.

Adams - 539	Grays Harbor - 1,385	Pierce - 9,666
Asotin - 278	Island - 1,475	San Juan - 295
Benton - 3,192	Jefferson - 474	Skagit - 1,851
Chelan - 1,397	King - 14,225	Skamania - 79
Clallam - 1,338	Kitsap - 5,074	Snohomish - 11,045
Clark - 9,114	Kittitas - 770	Spokane - 9,551
Columbia - 73	Klickitat - 285	Stevens - 925
Cowlitz - 3,302	Lewis - 2,801	Thurston - 4,212
Douglas - 862	Lincoln - 173	Wahkiakum - 65
Ferry - 58	Mason - 921	Walla Walla - 832
Franklin - 1,369	Okanogan - 1,307	Whatcom - 4,068
Garfield - 31	Pacific - 317	Whitman - 843
Grant - 1,713	Pend Oreille - 254	Yakima - 4,433

The list below showcases program enrollment saturation by individual county against each county's total eligible population of children ages birth to five. These numbers are based on the latest November books data.

Adams - 29%	Grays Harbor - 36%	Pierce - 16.5%
Asotin - 22.5%	Island - 31.5%	San Juan - 58%
Benton - 23%	Jefferson - 53%	Skagit - 25%
Chelan - 30%	King - 11%	Skamania - 16%
Clallam - 40%	Kitsap - 33%	Snohomish - 22%
Clark - 31%	Kittitas - 41%	Spokane - 30.5%
Columbia - 41.5%	Klickitat - 27.5%	Stevens - 38.5%
Cowlitz - 51%	Lewis - 59%	Thurston - 25.5%
Douglas - 31.5%	Lincoln - 29.5%	Wahkiakum - 40%
Ferry - 17%	Mason - 27%	Walla Walla - 26%
Franklin - 16.5%	Okanogan - 52%	Whatcom - 36%
Garfield - 34%	Pacific - 36.5%	Whitman - 42.5%
Grant - 23.5%	Pend Oreille - 42%	Yakima - 22%



MOVING FORWARD

The Next Chapter

In 2024, Imagination Library of Washington will be focused on informing and inspiring Washingtonians, state leaders, and lawmakers, specifically on the importance of continued support and funding to ensure Washington children under five receive a free monthly book in the mail, allowing them to build critical skills for their academic future. Previous state biennium funding for startup was not sufficient to cover the costs of the statewide program through the 2023-2025 biennium. Additional state funding is needed to ensure that all Washington children grow up with books! The state commitment for a 50% funding match is necessary to support local program partners with the majority of them struggling to continue as the financial burden becomes too high to continue serving their region's children. We thank our state legislators for their continued support!

Plans for the new year also include the creation of a stand-alone 501(c)3, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, the statewide program currently powered by United Ways of the Pacific Northwest.

A 2024 focus will be on strengthening local programs and growing enrollment. The ILWA team is looking forward to continue efforts to promote, develop, and sustain this statewide program for our youngest learners.

We are excited to soon be able to share the output of a 2023 fall kindergarten assessment data collection survey with a local Washington school district. We anticipate survey data results will mirror global research over the last twenty-nine years that Dolly Parton's Imagination Library prepares children for kindergarten, inspires a love of reading, and affects home literacy.

“Building and maintaining collaborative partnerships is a main goal for 2024, as the Imagination Library’s lifespan relies on the bond, unity, and commitment from Washingtonians that believe in giving our children the best start possible.”

**-Brooke Fisher Clark
Executive Director, ILWA**