



News Release PRESS CONFERENCE NOTIFICATION

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Date: January 16, 2018

Wake County SmartStart Launches Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Wake County Delivering Free Books Monthly

RALEIGH, NC – **In the next two years, 40,000 young children in Wake County will open their mailboxes to a new book each month, sent to them for free, as part of a program to build literacy skills.** Wake County SmartStart (WCSS) is hosting a press event to launch Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program locally, highlighting the value of books in the home and the importance of early literacy to education, business, and community well-being:

DATE: January 25, 2018
TIME: 10:30 a.m.
LOCATION: Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce
800 S. Salisbury Street, Raleigh, NC 27601

SPEAKERS (In order of presentation):

Ms. Adrienne Cole, President and CEO, Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce
Ms. Angie Welsh, Chair, Wake County SmartStart Board of Directors
Ms. Pam Dowdy, Executive Director, Wake County SmartStart
Ms. Rebecca Quinn Wolf, Vice President of Client and Community Relations, PNC Bank
Senator Tamara Barringer, NC Senate, District 17
Commissioner Jessica Holmes, Chair, Wake County Board of Commissioners

The Imagination Library program was created to foster a love of reading among children aged birth to five through the gift of books. Funding for this initiative was provided state-wide by the North Carolina General Assembly to support early literacy. WCSS will receive \$51,000 annually to bring the Imagination Library to over half of Wake County's youngest children. **Currently 32% of third graders in Wake County are not reading at grade level.** Investments that build literacy skills are part of WCSS's work to provide children with a solid foundation for Kindergarten and life ahead, along with strengthening families and expanding access to high quality early learning experiences.

"Our state leaders see the importance of books in the home and an early love of reading as critical to later life success," shared Angie Welsh, Board Chair of Wake County SmartStart. "We are excited to offer the Imagination Library literacy program as part of our work to help children build a strong foundation for starting Kindergarten."

To find out more about Parton's Imagination Library in Wake County, and to check availability and register a child, visit <http://www.wakesmartstart.org/program/imagination-library/>

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[Dolly Parton's Imagination Library](#) is a book gifting program for children from birth to age five. The mission of the program is to foster a love of reading in preschool children and ensure that every child born has books, regardless of their family's income.

[Wake County SmartStart](#) works to ensure children, birth to five, are prepared for success in school and in life. This mission is carried out in four goal areas; children are in safe supportive home environments, are in high-quality care that contributes to positive child outcomes, are healthy and ready for school, and that children and their families are supported by a strong, diverse, integrated early childhood system. Through community collaborations and funding of local partners, we expand the support available to children and their families. To learn more about our mission, visit www.wakesmartstart.org.