



## BOOKS FROM BIRTH 2023 CAMPAIGN REPORT

**Books from Birth, A Community Gift for Raising Readers** kicked off their campaign last April with the goal to raise \$225,000. Reaching that goal would give every baby born at Munson Medical Center Traverse City from Antrim, Benzie, Kalkaska, Grand Traverse & Leelanau Counties the opportunity to register in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, at no cost to the family. Since November 1, 2023 the parents of every newborn have received information on how to receive a new, age-appropriate book mailed every month to their home in their child's name until their 5th birthday. Registration is made available at the time the birth certificate is completed, before the newborn leaves the hospital.

A 5-County enrollment drive is currently underway to reach **all young families with children under the age of 5** to encourage their registration in the local Imagination Library program. **This is the first time that Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has been offered in Antrim County.** Bob Robbins, Chairperson of the Books from Birth effort, says, "We are so gratified to have reached our 2023 campaign goal. We are especially pleased to have received grants from the most significant non-profit funders in our region. They include; Impact 100, GTR Community Foundation, Rotary Charities, 100 Women Who Care Elk Rapids, Rotary Club of Traverse



Bay Sunrise, The Antrim Foundation, Elk Rapids Rotary, Mancelona Rotary and Traverse City Horse Shows. This tremendous support from our non-profit funding leaders affirms the critical need for our program."

"We are elated to have the Books from Birth program fully funded through the end of 2024", says Betsy Moore, Main Coordinator of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library GTR, the local nonprofit partner for the Grand Traverse Region. "But we all know that the babies will keep coming. Our challenge now is to secure sustainable funding from individuals and businesses that will carry us into the future."

## Why does it matter?

Parents are their baby's first teacher; 85% of a child's brain is developed by age 3. "We have a crisis in kindergarten readiness and 3rd grade reading levels in our 5-County region. 56% are not ready for kindergarten and 52% are not reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade. This is a tragic situation and it doesn't have to be this way. We've learned so much about early brain development and its impact on lifelong learning success in the past 10 years," states Robbins.



**Born To Read**, the initial supporter and founding partner in the Books from Birth initiative, is an all-volunteer effort of the Rotary Club of Traverse Bay Sunrise. Born to Read spreads the word about the importance of singing, talking and reading with children every day from birth on. "We want every parent to hear our message as early and as often as possible, from prenatal clinics to delivery at Munson and afterwards", says Sharon Workman from Born to Read. "By working with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and the birth registrars and maternity nursing staff at Munson Medical Center, we can now provide books to our babies right from the beginning, and continue until they go to kindergarten!"



## About Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Since launching in 1995, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has become the preeminent early childhood book gifting program in the world. The flagship program of The Dollywood Foundation has gifted well over 227 million free books in the United States and abroad. This is accomplished with the help of local community partners. The Imagination Library mails more than 2.8 million high-quality, age-appropriate books each month to registered children. Dolly envisioned creating a lifelong love of reading and inspiring children to "Dream More, Learn More, Care More and Be More." The impact of the program has been widely researched and results show positive increases in key early childhood literacy metrics.



For more information about the Imagination Library or to register your child, please visit [imaginationlibrary.com](http://imaginationlibrary.com).

