

Clarendon County First Steps is Turning the Pages to Success through the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program

Early childhood experts agree, literacy during the early years of life is critical for later success in school. Having access to quality, age-appropriate books in the home, a child's first classroom, is a major step in helping children develop early literacy and language skills. That is why when Clarendon County First Steps (CCFS) had the opportunity to implement Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL), they jumped at the chance to do so!

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a program that mails children a free book each month from birth up until 5 years old. These are high-quality books that are chosen by experts in the education and writing field and are based on the child's age. This program's mission is to foster a love of learning in children, making the experience fun and meaningful. Children receive a book on different subjects like rhyming, nursery rhymes, letters, safety, diversity and school preparation. The free books from the Dolly Parton Imagination Library strive to showcase diversity, help build self-confidence, and show the importance of the arts and its impact on the world.



"Dolly Parton Imagination Library represents a wonderful opportunity for Clarendon County's families with young children who learn from day one the importance of early literacy, especially during the early years."

- Tonia Smith, CCFS Board Chairperson

With the help of generous financial support from Clarendon County Council's Community Giving Program, CCFS began implementing the DPIL in Clarendon County in 2007. **In the ten years since beginning the program, CCFS has gifted 29,889 books to 947 of Clarendon County's children.**

"DPIL represents a wonderful opportunity for Clarendon County's families with young children to learn from day one the importance

of early literacy, particularly during the early years," says Tonia Smith, chairperson of CCFS' Partnership Board. The family of each child that is enrolled receives a welcome letter from CCFS. Accompanying each welcome letter is an age-appropriate literacy guide that was developed by the American Library Association. The literacy guides provide information on pre-literacy and literacy skills and offer tips on activities parents/guardians can incorporate into their daily lives to help promote early literacy development in their preschool children. **All of the families participating in CCFS' Parents as Teachers (PAT) program (41 families in 2016-17) are also enrolled in DPIL.** The PAT home visitor is therefore able to reinforce with the families the reading of the DPIL book received each month.

CCFS is constantly seeking additional funding to achieve their goal of having every child in Clarendon County participate in the program and receive quality, age-appropriate free books from the time they enroll (ideally at birth) until the time they graduate the program at age five. The cost to sponsor an individual child is approximately \$33 per year.



For more information on Clarendon County First Steps' Dolly Parton Imagination Library program, please contact CCFS Executive Director Sharon Williams at clarendonfs@ffc-i.net