Promoting early childhood literacy in Tennessee’s birth to age five population

GovernorsFoundation.org
Our vision is a Tennessee where all preschool children have books in their homes, develop a love of reading and learning, and begin school prepared to succeed, from kindergarten throughout their educational journeys.

To all our friends, stakeholders, champions, parents, teachers, legislators and Tennessee citizens who support our mission of promoting early childhood literacy, we give our heartfelt thanks. Since 2004, Governor’s Books from Birth Foundation has focused on being a strong advocate for the hundreds of volunteers and staff who raise 50% of this program’s cost and fervently engage their local communities around the long-term benefits of having children receive Imagination Library books each month. We have surpassed delivering 33 million books statewide since inception, with monthly enrollment continuing to grow. As other Imagination Library programs in the U.S. and worldwide look to Tennessee to understand how we have achieved this success and are able to sustain this vibrant program, we know one thing for sure – that the elegant model upon which we are built is upheld by the solid commitment of diverse public and private partners who believe in early childhood literacy as the key to the brightest possible future for our children. We are grateful for each of you!

Theresa Carl
President
Governor’s Books from Birth Foundation

“After 14 years and more than 33 million books delivered statewide, Governor’s Books from Birth Foundation continues to give all young children in Tennessee access to Imagination Library books and the opportunity to develop early literacy skills that are critical to education, health and quality of life. This program is laying the groundwork for Tennessee’s successful future, starting from birth.”

Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam and First Lady Crissy Haslam
Tennessee children skip to the mailbox each month, excited to find their Imagination Library book. Thanks to the passion for reading shared by our state leaders, local community volunteers and donors, every preschooler in the state has access to receiving these books. Without question, our state is a better place because of this amazing program.

Mark Cate, Chairman of the Board
PROMOTING EARLY LITERACY IN TENNESSEE’S CHILDREN

Tennessee’s Imagination Library

Governor’s Books from Birth Foundation (GBBF), in partnership with Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, gives all Tennessee children, birth to age five, the opportunity to receive books in the mail at no cost to families.

How this works

Each local affiliate program enrolls children, promotes the program in its community and raises funds for half of the cost of books and mailing.

Through an annual state grant, GBBF funds the other half of the cost of books and mailing and supports local affiliate programs through fundraising, volunteer training and public relations.

The Dollywood Foundation manages selection, pricing and distribution of the books.

This is a dynamic public-private partnership unlike any other in the U.S. today.
3 NEW INITIATIVES EMBOLDENED OUR MISSION

“Early Literacy Matters”
Teacher Training Pilot
GBBF partnered with the Tennessee Department of Education (DOE) and the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS) to launch a pilot program at non-public schools and childcare centers, focused on integrating more literacy-based practices into birth to five classrooms.

Imagination Library
StoryBook Trails
GBBF partnered with the Tennessee State Parks Conservancy (TSPC) and the Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation (TDEC) to create Imagination Library StoryBook Trails at six state parks.

Summer Mobile
Literacy Programs
GBBF, through the Appalachian Regional Commission, helped fund and launch summer mobile book buses to serve children in three Northeast TN school systems.
TENNESSEE’S IMAGINATION LIBRARY
REACHING MORE CHILDREN EACH MONTH

3.3 million books
were mailed to Tennessee children

45% of TN counties have enrollment percentages
at or above the statewide average of 69%

33.1 Million
books and counting have
been delivered since October 2004.

More than 619,000
five-year-olds have
graduated from the
Imagination Library.

All of Tennessee’s
407,813
children under the age
of five have access to the
Imagination Library.

More than 284,000
Tennessee children are
receiving books currently.

69.8%
of Tennessee’s
preschoolers are
enrolled in the
Imagination Library.

Data in this report as of July 2018
STATEWIDE ENROLLMENT PARTNERS

Tennessee Department of Children’s Services and the Verizon Foundation

Every age-eligible child in Foster Care is enrolled.

“The Department of Children’s Services always encourages our foster families to include reading as part of their daily routine. Not only does it create a lifetime love of reading, it improves their creativity and imagination, and strengthens their skills in all areas of education.”
Commissioner Bonnie Hommrich, Department of Children’s Services

Tennessee Department of Health (DOH), Welcome Baby Initiative

Through DOH’s Welcome Baby program, each newborn family is mailed a welcome letter signed by Governor and First Lady Haslam that includes an Imagination Library enrollment brochure.

Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS)

Parents are given the opportunity to enroll their child into the Imagination Library at more than 130 DHS offices across the state.

“Early success in literacy is a precursor for positive outcomes as an adult. We know the tremendous difference early literacy can have on the children and families we serve in breaking generational cycles of poverty. Through this partnership we are collectively building a thriving Tennessee.”
Commissioner Danielle Barnes, Department of Human Services

5,845 children were enrolled through the DHS partnership.

Birthing Hospital Initiative

Families are given the opportunity to enroll their newborn into the Imagination Library and receive a copy of the first book before leaving the hospital.

19 birthing hospitals are now participating, potentially reaching more than 35,700 newborns per year.

2,471 children were enrolled through the Welcome Baby partnership.

11,986 newborns were enrolled through the Birthing Hospital Initiative.
**STORYBOOK TRAILS**

GBBF launched a partnership with the Tennessee State Parks Conservancy (TSPC) and the Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation (TDEC) to build six Imagination Library StoryBook Trails at state parks in Middle Tennessee. Each trail tells a nature-themed Imagination Library story on panels placed along a short, child-friendly path. The panels include a family reading tip to connect the book with surrounding nature.

**SUMMER MOBILE LITERACY PROGRAMS**

GBBF launched three summer mobile book buses in Northeast Tennessee in partnership with local school systems and community sponsors. Working to prevent the “Summer Slide” in students, these book bus programs deliver books to community neighborhoods and give age-eligible children the opportunity to enroll in the Imagination Library.

**Coming soon!**

- Cumberland Mountain State Park
  Cumberland County
- Henry Horton State Park
  Marshall County
- Montgomery Bell State Park
  Dickson County
- Pickett State Park
  Pickett County

**Unicoi County Schools Aspire Book Bus**

**Elizabethton City Schools**

**Carter County Schools**

**Betsy Book Bus**

**R.E.A.D.S. Book Bus**
GBBF partnered with the Tennessee Department of Education (DOE) and the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS) to launch an early childhood training pilot program at non-public schools and childcare centers, focused on integrating more literacy-based practices into birth to five classrooms.

**September 2017 through June 2018**

873 teachers  
535 classrooms  
5,279 children

Each classroom teacher, assistant and site director completed six online learning modules and received a set of 7 Imagination Library books for classroom use. Additional copies of each book were provided to encourage family reading time at home.

Children in pilot participating classrooms **outscored** children in non-pilot participating classrooms in **every category of the early literacy assessment**, including:

- alphabetical principle
- phonological awareness
- print concepts
- comprehension
“Helping a child embrace learning at a young age makes all the difference in the world. When reading is a staple in a child’s life, learning becomes second nature and that leads to a well-educated workforce, which is a tremendous asset for Tennessee.”

Commissioner Burns Phillips, TN Department of Labor & Workforce

**GBBF AND TN DEPT. OF HEALTH PROMOTE “LANGUAGE NUTRITION”**

The Tennessee Department of Health (DOH), with support from GBBF, introduced a pilot of the Georgia DOH “Talk With Me Baby” initiative, educating families on the importance of “language nutrition,” or rich communication with babies, at check-up visits.

Early language exposure sets the foundation for cognitive ability, literacy, and school readiness and is the single strongest predictor of third grade reading proficiency.

talkwithmebaby.org/research

The First Five Years Matter

Investing in high-quality birth-to-five programs for … children can deliver a 13% per year return on investment.

A critical time to shape productivity is from birth to age five, when the brain develops rapidly to build the foundation of cognitive and character skills necessary for success in school, health, career and life.


2018

34% of Tennessee third graders read proficiently.

2025 Goal:

75% of students reading on grade level by third grade.
Engaging the Statewide Community

CELEBRATING 30 MILLION BOOKS MAILED SINCE 2013
Imagination Library Week  September 16-22, 2017

#GotCaughtReading: Governor Bill Haslam and First Lady Crissy Haslam launched GBBF’s third annual #GotCaughtReading social media challenge, encouraging every Tennessean to “Get Caught Reading” an Imagination Library book.

160+ posts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

13 news stories covered IL Week

5 TN media markets aired GBBF PSA TV spot

459 spots aired

1.9M total PSA views

8 million total billboard views

160+ people reached

16 state agencies

6 GBBF Advisory Council members

8 Tennessee court judges

23 county programs—and more participated

GBBF launched its first billboard and public service announcement campaign across the state, featuring the 30 million books mailed message and GBBF’s parent engagement video.

27 digital and print billboards displayed statewide
TN STATE DEPARTMENTS CELEBRATE OUR IMPACT ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

During Imagination Library Week, the Tennessee Department of Economic & Community Development (TNECD) and the Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development (TDLWD) joined GBBF at a celebratory event in the Senate Library of the Tennessee Capitol to honor the program’s early literacy impacts on workforce development.

“Early reading skills are imperative to educational success and essentially lay the foundation for a talented workforce in the future. Governor’s Books from Birth Foundation is critical to economic and workforce development, and I applaud their efforts to promote and build early childhood literacy.”

Commissioner Bob Rolfe,
TN Department of Economic & Community Development

Engaging the Statewide Community

September 18, 2017: First Lady Crissy Haslam, TNECD Commissioner Bob Rolfe, and TDLWD Commissioner Burns Phillips read to students from Caldwell Elementary in the Senate Library to celebrate the program’s role in preparing Tennessee’s children from cradle to career.
Delta Dental of Tennessee partnered with GBBF to award 26 Bigger Smiles grants to support the enrollment growth of Imagination Library programs in selected Tennessee counties. GBBF and Delta Dental of Tennessee held 4 regional check presentations in Nashville, Jackson, Cookeville and Knoxville.

January 2018; Representatives from surrounding awarded counties were invited to each check presentation and met Delta Dental President and CEO and GBBF Board Member Dr. Phil Wenk.
GBBF co-sponsored *The Summit on Children: The Science and Story of Poverty* with the Eastman Foundation, Niswonger Foundation and Leadership Tennessee at the Niswonger Performing Arts Center in Greeneville, TN. The summit brought together educators and others who work with children to learn about the effects of poverty on children, and how they can take action to make a difference.

April 11, 2018: GBBF President Theresa Carl introduced keynote speaker, Jeannette Walls, author of *New York Times* best-selling memoir, *The Glass Castle*, who told her story about living in poverty as a child and her belief that education is the great equalizer.

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February 27, 2018: In celebration of 100 million Imagination Library books mailed across the world, Dolly Parton dedicated the 100 millionth book to the Library of Congress.

First Lady Crissy Haslam, GBBF President Theresa Carl and Vice President Dean Hoskins were thrilled to celebrate the milestone of 100 million books delivered by Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library in Washington, D.C. at the Library of Congress. At the celebration, Dolly Parton read *Coat of Many Colors* to children in the audience.
Grassroots Work of the Volunteer State

41 county programs visited
78 trips helping program volunteers across TN
800 volunteers help TN’s Imagination Library (IL) reach more children
106 volunteers representing 55 counties participated in GBBF IL regional training summits

58% of IL programs receive some sort of city or county funding

“Early exposure to reading and vocabulary creates a firm foundation on which to build a successful educational journey. Literacy opens the door to a world of opportunities, and I believe every child deserves to have that door opened. I look forward to seeing how my service today positively impacts the economic development and future workforce of tomorrow.”

Jason Schultz, Madison County Imagination Library Coordinator
Early literacy drives healthy growth by helping children develop crucial skills, like language and concentration, that can fuel success later in life. The BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Health Foundation is proud to support the work of Governor’s Books from Birth Foundation and Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library as they promote reading across the state.”

Roy Vaughn, Senior Vice President & Chief Communications Officer, BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee

“Nissan sponsors many educational programs to help children and youth learn and grow. What better way to nurture opportunity in the communities where we live and work than to promote literacy and a desire to learn among children from an early age. We are proud to partner with Governor’s Books from Birth Foundation and Tennessee’s Imagination Library.”

Rebecca Vest, Vice President of Corporate Development and Social Responsibility, Nissan
Enterprise Holdings is committed to giving back to the communities where we operate. In Tennessee, we are proud to support GBBF, whose goal it is to improve childhood literacy throughout the state.

Karen Baker, Enterprise Holdings Foundation

“Verizon recognizes the value of providing Imagination Library books for ALL of Tennessee’s young children, especially those in foster care. This is a gift much greater than just the book itself. It opens a pathway to the world of possibilities awaiting every child.”

Julie Smith, Director of External & Governmental Affairs, Verizon Foundation

GBBF and the Verizon Foundation provided enrollment brochures, sample sets of Imagination Library books, activity books and posters to over 90 DCS offices statewide to celebrate the enrollment partnership and give families the tools to further engage with their books.
THOSE WHO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Advisory Council

Calvin Anderson, Former Senior Vice President of Corporate Affairs and Chief of Staff, BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Health Foundation

Mayor Jake Bynum, Weakley County

Dr. Nancy Dishner, President and CEO, Niswonger Foundation

Donna Noland, First Lady, East Tennessee State University

Dr. Shirley Raines, President Emeritus, University of Memphis

Vicki Smith, Senior Manager of Corporate Social Responsibility, Nissan North America Inc

Byron Trauger, Partner; Trauger & Tuke

Laura Travis, Associate Agent, Ron Travis Agency

Dr. Michael D. Warren, Assistant Commissioner; Division of Family Health & Wellness, Tennessee Department of Health

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Some of my boys’ most favorite books have come from the Imagination Library. *Runaway Tomato* and *If I Built a Car* are two of the biggest hits with them. We read at least one most every night before bedtime. That precious time spent cuddling and reading together is one of our favorite parts of the day. Thank you Imagination Library for playing a part in that!

Parent, Jackson County