

Beebe Healthcare Partners with Lewes Public Library, Delaware Libraries to Support Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

All babies born at Beebe Healthcare to receive first Imagination Library book

WILMINGTON, Del. – Beebe Healthcare and Lewes Public Library are partnering to ensure that all babies born at Beebe Healthcare in Lewes are registered for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. The families will be presented with the first Imagination Library book before discharge from the hospital. The [first family](#) to receive the book at Beebe Healthcare is Spencer Robert Heslep (baby), Stephanie Clavijo (mom) and Robert Heslep (dad).

"Beebe Healthcare is proud to be the first healthcare system in the First State to provide the first book to babies born at our Margaret H. Rollins Lewes Campus," said **Tom Protack, President of Beebe Medical Foundation**. "Studies show that early childhood literacy can be tied to better health and wellness later in life, and our donors want to support Beebe Healthcare in this effort."

In August 2020, Governor John Carney announced the expansion statewide of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library through Delaware's public libraries. Children whose parents enroll them with [Dolly Parton's Imagination Library](#) receive one new book in the mail each month from birth until the child's fifth birthday, at no cost to the family, creating a personal

library of as many as 60 books that can help form the foundation of a child's early reading experience. Information and registration are available [online through Delaware Libraries](#). Books are selected by a national panel of early childhood literacy experts who review hundreds of children's books each year and choose those that best fit the needs of children as they learn and grow.

*"A healthy reading habit motivates, inspires and encourages creativity among children and adults alike," said **Governor Carney**. "One of the most important things we can do to improve childhood literacy is to give our children access to books, especially during this challenging time. The Imagination Library program is also an important component of the First Chance Delaware initiative for children, led by First Lady Tracey Quillen Carney. The mission of First Chance Delaware includes promoting learning readiness through literacy and parent-child engagement. Thank you to Beebe Healthcare, Lewes Public Library, and all of our partners for your work on this important effort to improve literacy in our state."*

This new hospital initiative is a team effort. Imagination Library is offered internationally through the Dollywood Foundation and is managed for Delaware by the Division of Libraries. Beebe pediatricians and nurses advocate and facilitate registration for the program with new parents, and the Beebe Medical Foundation provides the first book and welcome bags, and Lewes Public Library registers the newborns in the Imagination Library database.

"Amazing things can happen when community partnerships come together. We're so proud to offer this service to all of the Beebe Babies. Thank you to the donors who made this possible, along with the Beebe care team that will be delivering the first books, and to the library staff who will make sure these newborns receive the Imagination Library books each month for

five years,” said **David A. Tam, MD, MBA, FACHE, President & CEO, Beebe Healthcare.**

“It’s a natural fit for libraries to facilitate Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library. After all, early literacy is one of our core missions,” said **Jennifer Noonan, Children’s Librarian at Lewes Public Library,** who first initiated Imagination Library within the Cape Henlopen School District in 2018. “Getting books into the hands of children and their families is of crucial importance, and the earlier we can do it, the better.”

According to literacy statistics compiled by Begin to Read, two-thirds of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of the 4th grade will end up in jail or on welfare. Improving someone’s literacy reduces their chance of dropping out of school, of being incarcerated, of experiencing teenage pregnancy, and of living in poverty. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends caregivers read to their children from birth, because the more words babies hear, the better their literacy, vocabulary, and reading comprehension will be in the future. For public libraries across Delaware, the Imagination Library program serves as a springboard for children and parents to engage with their local libraries, participate in library programming and take advantage of the many resources libraries have to offer.

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