



---

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Smart Start of Mecklenburg County to Expand Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to 20,000 Children!

[Charlotte, NC, October 20, 2017] - Smart Start of Mecklenburg County and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library are working together to bring books to Mecklenburg County's youngest children through funding provided by the North Carolina General Assembly.

During the 2017 legislative session, North Carolina state lawmakers included \$3.5 million in the first year of the budget and \$7 million in the second year for the Smart Start network to offer free books through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to children across the state. Imagination Library is a program created to foster a love of reading among children aged birth to five through the gift of a specially selected book delivered right to their home each month.

"I'm thrilled that my Imagination Library is going to be offered to so many children in North Carolina" stated Dolly Parton, the founder of Imagination Library. "Working together we can help children dream more, learn more, care more, and be more."

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library (DPIL) Program has been in Mecklenburg County for the past 2 years supporting 2,800 children with private dollars. Smart Start of Mecklenburg County (SSMC) has been awarded state funding to expand the existing DPIL program county wide. This amount allows SSMC to support an additional 20,000 children to receive age related, developmentally appropriate books mailed directly to their homes monthly.

"Our state leaders clearly understand how important an early love of reading is for each child's success in school and later in life," stated Cindy Watkins, the President of the North Carolina Partnership for Children that oversees the Smart Start network, "Smart Start works in every community to ensure young children have a strong foundation for starting kindergarten – now we can offer this important literacy program to that critical work."

The statewide effort will begin in 98 of North Carolina's 100 counties. Because the program is offered by zip code, the initial launch will cover 85 percent of NC zip codes expanding to cover every county by the second year.

In order to ensure that all 70,716 children in our community younger than 5 can enroll, please consider an annual donation of \$30 to sponsor a child in this program. Smart Start of Mecklenburg County's goal is to have this program in every home in Mecklenburg County.

To find out more about Smart Start of Mecklenburg County and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library partnership, to sponsor or register a child, visit <http://www.smartstartofmeck.org/programs/dpil>

[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.

[Smart Start is a network of 75 nonprofit local partnerships](#) that serve all 100 North Carolina counties. This network is led by The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc. (NCPC) that ensures fiscal and programmatic accountability, and coordinates the statewide network to create better outcomes for children and families.

**Media Contact:** Cassandra Harris, Public Education Manager at Smart Start of Mecklenburg County - (704) 943-9412  
charris@smartstartofmeck.org

**Media Resources:** Smart Start of Mecklenburg County: [www.smartstartofmeck.org](http://www.smartstartofmeck.org)

**Social Sharing:**

Hashtags: **#SmartStartMeck**

Facebook: **@SmartStartMeck**

Twitter: **@SmartStartMeck**

Instagram: **@SmartStartMeck**