

Statement of Achievement – Ms. Dolly Parton, Imagination Library

This statement is written in support of the candidacy of Ms. Dolly Parton for the American Library Association's (ALA) Honorary Membership Award.

Ms. Parton is an American living legend. Here in Tennessee, she is our patron saint. While Ms. Parton's long-lived career would be enough to ensure her a place in history, it is in her work to promote early childhood education through literacy that is prompting this nomination.

In 1995, Ms. Parton created and launched the Imagination Library to combat illiteracy in her hometown of Sevierville, TN as a tribute to her father, a wonderful, smart, humble man that could not read. She expressed that his inability to read probably limited her father in fulfilling all of his dreams in life. Ms. Parton's goal in creating the Imagination Library was simply to inspire the love of reading in children from birth to school at no cost to the recipient and regardless of socio-economic status. Twenty-five years after the creation of the Imagination Library, what once was a hometown literacy effort has expanded into an international program to combat illiteracy and to inspire a love of reading. Now, the Imagination Library serves the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, and Australia as well as the children of the United States.

Ms. Parton does not do this good work alone but has brought in a panel of experts in literacy to choose books that will be sent with the themes of "Inspiration & Imagination" and promote a "love [of] reading and learning; regard for diversity of people, their roles, culture, and environment; promotion of self-esteem and confidence, [and an] appreciation of art and aesthetics." As the program has expanded, the Imagination Library strives to reach all children and be more inclusive by partnering with the American Printing House for the Blind, Inc., to provide books printed in braille and available as audio books.

By the year 2003, one million books had been mailed. Today, one million books are mailed every month around the world. Through these efforts, Ms. Parton hopes that these readers will "Dream More, Learn More, Care More and Be More." The Imagination Library's website states that "Recent studies suggest participation in the Imagination Library is positively and significantly associated with higher measures of early language and math development. "

Recently, during Covid 19 quarantine, Ms. Parton read bedtime stories to the nation's children (and many of us "children at heart") to help bring a sense of normalcy to a very abnormal time.

As Tennessee Library Association Chapter Councilor, it is for these reasons that I am nominating Ms. Dolly Parton for the ALA Honorary Member Award.

NOTE: All information and quotes were taken from the [Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Website](#) where even more information about this program and Ms. Parton's vision may be found.