

DOLLY PARTON'S UK IMAGINATION LIBRARY ANNOUNCES THE DELIVERY OF THE 500,000 BOOK TO UK CHILDREN

Submitted by: Four Countries Communications

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Dolly Parton's UK Imagination Library today announced that it has reached a major milestone by delivering its 500,000th free book to children across the UK. The recipient is 11 month old Finley Theobald, from Luton who received the special book along with a personal message from Dolly Parton.

The international music star launched the UK Imagination Library in December 2007 with the first books being delivered in 2008.

Commenting on the UK Imagination Library's hitting the half a million milestone Dolly Parton Dolly Parton message (<http://vimeo.com/40646828>) said: "I can't believe we have just mailed our 500,000th book in the UK! Little Finley Theobald from Luton just received this very special book. I am so sorry I can't be there to give Finley his book in person, but just like every other month the postman will be making this delivery for me."

"It was only just a few short years ago that we mailed our first books to children in Rotherham. It's hard to believe we have grown so much in such a short time. We have come a long way but we have really only just begun. As we celebrate this milestone I'd like to thank all of our local sponsors and our partners who work so hard to make this all work for us.

The programme is now distributing, through Royal Mail, around 20,000 free books every month to children between one month to 5 years of age in communities across the UK. The Library, in partnership with the Scottish Book Trust and the Scottish Government, is working at enrolling and sending a free book every month to over 3,000 children who are looked-after by care organisations in Scotland.

Royal Mail's Chief Customer Officer Mike Newnham said: "We are delighted our postmen and women across the UK are playing such a key role in the success of the UK Imagination Library. Helping them hit the half a million book delivery mark is something we are pleased to be part of."

The Imagination Library's partner in Luton is Wates Giving, which has funded and distributed over 30,000 books so far in the area since its launch there in 2010. Brian Wheelwright, Director of Wates Family Charities on congratulated Finley said:

"The Wates family, owners of the Wates Group, are proud to support the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and its contribution to developing the reading skills of our future generations through the Wates Giving charitable programme. Our involvement with the scheme demonstrates our significant commitment to the communities in which Wates works, and we are thrilled that a Luton child has benefited from this milestone book."

A recent survey into the impact of the Imagination Library books on families involved in the programme showed that 80 per cent of parents read more to their children after receiving the books; that the children watched 25 per cent less TV as they read more; and that three quarters of parents believed the books had improved their child's development in speech, language and vocabulary.

The Imagination Library also recently announced it had delivered 40 million books across the US, Canada and UK since the launch of the scheme to children in Dolly's home county of Sevier, Tennessee in 1996. The programme is now replicated and sponsored locally by over 1,600 communities in the three participating countries.

Anyone wishing to find out more about how they can work with the Imagination Library and bring it to pre-school children in their area should visit [<http://uk.imaginationlibrary.com>].

Ends:

Link to a special video message from Dolly Parton to Finley below:

Dolly Parton message (<http://vimeo.com/40646828>)

Issued on behalf to the Dolly Parton Imagination Library by:

Patrick O'Neill

Mobile: 07889 998052

Four Countries Communications Email: info@fourcountries.co.uk