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Children select books at a Imagination Library graduation event at Dimond Park Aquatic Center.

Dolly Parton Imagination Library thanks supporters

The first newborns to enroll when the Dolly Parton Imagination Library started in Juneau are just beginning third grade this fall. We cheered for them as we watched them enter kindergarten a few years ago, and saw them raise the level of language and literacy in Juneau. We know having a home library of 60 books, each read aloud many times, helped them grow into strong, curious and confident readers today.

Along with cheering for these children, we offer a round of applause for all the local sponsors in Juneau and Southeast Alaska that are placing books in the hands of nearly 2,000 children every month from the time they are born until their fifth birthday. The program is offered at no charge to families, and local sponsors cover the cost of the books — only \$30 per year for each child enrolled. Best Beginnings Alaska provides a matching grant, and our fabulous volunteer Patty George registers all the new babies every month, so local funds go directly to the books.

Thanks to the recent award of the United Way of Southeast Community Impact grant (\$2,500) and the Douglas Dornan Fund ad-

ministered by Juneau Community Foundation (\$1,500), over 130 more children will receive books, leading them into a lifetime love of reading. Research conducted in Tennessee shows that children enrolled in the Imagination Library enter kindergarten more prepared, and go on to achieve higher third grade reading skills. Being comfortable and excited about reading by third grade is linked to higher graduation in high school.

Along with the nearly 100 individuals and businesses that support early literacy in Juneau, we thank ongoing champions Friends of the Public Libraries, PEO Chapters D, N, and G, the Juneau Empire, the Mallott family, Epsilon Sigma Alpha (ESA), Elsa Demeksa and Peter Froehlich, the unofficial president of "Bicyclers for Books." Peter has donated all his wages for the past three years from his retirement job leading summer bike tours.

The other behind the scenes champions are the Juneau mail carriers that deliver all the books to each child's mailbox and return the books to us when a child moves. The books are then distributed to foster children, the AWARE shelter, Juneau Public Health and early childhood classrooms.

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