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## CONGRATULATIONS TO DOLLY PARTON AND THE DOLLYWOOD FOUNDATION, 2024 RECIPIENTS OF THE ECS CORPORATE AWARD

Education Commission of the States is pleased to honor Dolly Parton and the Dollywood Foundation with the 2024 ECS Corporate Award in recognition of nearly three decades of investment in expanding children's access to high-quality books and inspiring a love of reading across the country.



Dolly Parton created the Dollywood Foundation in 1988 to inspire children in her home region of Sevier County, Tennessee to succeed academically and help decrease high school dropout rates. In 1995, Parton launched the Imagination Library in honor of her father, who could not read or write, with the goal that no child would grow up without being able to read.

Today, the flagship program of the Dollywood Foundation is an international book-gifting program that operates in five countries, has gifted over 240 million books since inception and currently gifts over three million books each month.

Parton's Imagination Library is dedicated to inspiring a love of reading by gifting books to children from birth to age five through funding shared by Parton and state and local program partners. Early childhood development experts select high-quality, age-appropriate books and the Foundation works with local program partners to deliver books to families regardless of their income or background. The impact of the program has been widely researched and results suggest positive increases in key early childhood literacy metrics and education success.

A nominator said, "[Dolly Parton's Imagination Library] supports promising practices to improve student outcomes by using unique strategies to inspire family reading, is community-based to drive participation and engagement, and most importantly, is designed to improve the lives of children [through] a lifelong love of reading and book ownership."

The impact for children and families doesn't stop there. Twenty-one state governments have established statewide programs that expand funding

and access to the Imagination Library and more are on the way. Currently, one in seven children in the U.S. receive books from the library.

As Parton said, “You can never get enough books into the hands of enough children.” The Foundation continues to make her dream a reality.

Education Commission of the States will present the Dollywood Foundation with the ECS Corporate Award at the 2024 National Forum on Education Policy July 10-12 in Washington, D.C.

The Corporate Award is one of three awards that Education Commission of the States gives each year to celebrate outstanding commitment to public education. The others are the James Bryant Conant Award, which recognizes individual achievement, and the Frank Newman Award for State Innovation, which recognizes states or territories.

For more information about the Dollywood Foundation, contact [Tracy Long](#), director of marketing and development.

For more information about Education Commission of the States or its awards, contact [Maryana Boatenreiter](#), communications manager.