Focus

The newsletter for Friends and the Foundation of the Cedar Rapids Public Library

Mission
Friends supports the CRPL mission and vision and promotes literacy through community outreach.

Mission
The Foundation mobilizes community resources and relationships that empower our Library to deliver innovative programs and services.

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Letter from the Foundation

For years, community partners have emphasized the importance of early-literacy and grade-level reading. This focus is in response to recent data showing low school-readiness scores for children entering kindergarten and substandard reading scores for children in third grade.

As our Library seeks to impact literacy in our community, the Library Foundation is turning its focus to Cedar Rapids’ children ages 0 to 5. Here is what we know:

- 90% of eventual adult brain growth is achieved in the first three years of life. (Campaign for Grade Level Reading)
- By age three, a child’s vocabulary can predict third grade reading success. (Campaign for Grade Level Reading)
- Children who grow up with books in their homes achieve on average three more years of education than those who do not. (Family Scholarly Culture and Educational Success: Evans et al., 2010)
- Last school year, 45% of Cedar Rapids children entering kindergarten were not ready to learn.

Focusing on these early years of literacy and language development, we are proud to introduce Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library to the City of Cedar Rapids. Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library is one of the largest early-literacy programs in the United States, mailing more than 1 million books per month to children in four countries.

In January, we quietly began enrolling children through our nonprofit partners YPN, HACAP, Eastern Iowa Health Center, and Mercy Medical Center. In the first six weeks, we registered more than 1,400 children.

We truly believe that this program will transform the early-literacy landscape in our community, and we couldn’t do this without you. These children will become our workforce, our teachers, our elected officials, our business owners, and our community leaders.

You, our Library Foundation supporters, are giving the gift of literacy to all children in Cedar Rapids. I hope you enjoy learning more about your Imagination Library and take pride in your role bringing this resource to our community.

With gratitude,

Charity D. Tyler
Executive Director

Letter from Friends

Dear Friends,

Is there anyone who doesn’t love books?

From the small child, eager to get her hands on a picture book that weighs as much as she does, to the 80+ year-old shut-in who is equally eager to read what she’s received from the Library’s Books By Mail program— who doesn’t love books?

Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library love books, too.

The number of books handled by our Friends volunteers is simply too great to quantify. Every week, box upon box of used book donations arrive in the sorting center, and Friends volunteers are there to receive them. The continuous cycle of sorting and selling and sorting and selling, can only be explained by love.

In addition to loving books, Friends of the Library love community members who are magnanimous in their donations of gently used books to our library larder. Parting with a beloved book is too difficult for some. We understand. The noble resolution to downsize— sometimes a fleeting resolution— can provide the impetus to clear out a few shelves, too. But most often, the largest number of donated books are passed on to the Friends for that very same reason: someone has passed on.

Friends of the Library are privileged to be the recipients of your late mother’s cookbook collection, your late uncle’s complete set of Louis L’Amour Westerns, or your great grandma’s first-edition of the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. They are handled with loving care and readied for the next owner who will fall in love just like the previous owner did.

But a word of caution: before you part with these family treasures, make sure you are firm in your decision. There’s nothing more heartbreaking than being told, “It’s been sold,” when you attempt to retrieve a beloved book you wish you’d held on to.

Loving books like you do,

Libby Gotschall Slappey
President

Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library Board of Directors
Libby Slappey, President
Jan Frischkorn, Vice-President
Barb Rhame, Secretary
Riley Williams, Treasurer
Jerry Campbell
Tom Marshall
Debbie Schroeder
Myron Williams
Giving the Gift of Literacy: Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Our Library Foundation is proud to bring Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to Cedar Rapids. Through this program, we hope to impact children and their families for generations to come.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library provides children with one free, age-appropriate book per month from birth to their fifth birthday. The program is free to all participants, and books are mailed to the child's home with the child's name on it. The first book mailed is *The Little Engine that Could*; the last is a special ‘graduation’ book titled *Look Out, Kindergarten, Here I Come!* This program is truly giving the gift of literacy to our children.

In a middle-income neighborhood, there are 13 books to one child; in a low-income neighborhood, there is only one book for 300 children. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library provides a child enrolled at birth with a personal library of 60 books before entering kindergarten! This program is truly giving the gift of literacy to our children.

About the Program

In 1995, Dolly Parton, through The Dollywood Foundation, launched Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in her home county in East Tennessee. The program was so successful that a national replication effort began in 2000. In 2005, the international book committee was formed, and by 2013, Imagination Library was mailing books to Canada, United Kingdom, and Australia. On February 27, 2018, Dolly Parton presented her Imagination Library's 100 millionth book to the Library of Congress.

Imagination Library affiliates across the country have conducted studies on school readiness and grade level reading, comparing scores of Imagination Library participants and their non-registered peers. These studies show positive results for both the enrolled children and their families.

- Participants have reported richer home literacy environments, and caregivers are reading more frequently to their children.
- In Knox, TN, research shows that kindergarteners enrolled in Imagination Library performed higher on Kindergarten Literacy Assessments than their non-enrolled peers and continued to outperform these peers when they reached third grade.
- Memphis, TN boasts statistically significant higher scores for vocabulary and reading comprehension for Imagination Library children versus non-participants.

We know Dolly Parton's Imagination Library supports grade-level reading efforts because it puts books in the hands of children on a monthly basis beginning at birth. Our hope is to replicate the positive results seen in other communities for families and children in Cedar Rapids.

How it Works

To participate, children must be residents of Cedar Rapids and under 5 years of age.

To enroll, parents or guardians can fill out an official registration form and return to the Library. Currently, registration forms can be found at both library locations (Downtown and Ladd) and on our Library’s website www.CRLibrary.org/Imagination-Library/. Soon, our community partners will also have registration forms available for the public.

A child's first book should arrive between eight to ten weeks after registration. The only responsibilities of the parent or caregiver are to 1) read to their child and 2) call our Library with any address updates.
Focus on Foundation

Making it Possible
The Dollywood Foundation works directly with nonprofit organizations to launch the Imagination Library in communities across the country. Locally, our Cedar Rapids Public Library Foundation went through the process of becoming an Imagination Library Affiliate.

The Dollywood Foundation manages book selection, the enrollment database, and the shipping processes, while our Library Foundation, through donor dollars, covers the costs of books and postage.

The Dollywood Foundation has a special relationship with Penguin Random House and ensures high-quality books are selected annually. The average retail cost of an Imagination Library book is $13. Because The Dollywood Foundation operates in large-scale, they’ve reduced Affiliate costs to approximately $25 per child, per year ($2.10 per book, per month).

There are approximately 9,100 children ages 0 to 5 in Cedar Rapids. Our goal is to enroll at least 80% of those children (or 7,300) within the next four years. The Library Foundation will continue to rely on community support and donor dollars to sustain the program into the future.

How to Help
Spread the word! Let friends and family living in Cedar Rapids know about Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library and encourage them to enroll their eligible children.

• Buy a ticket to our Monday, April 9 Imagination Library fundraiser sponsored by Bankers Trust and TrueNorth Companies.

• Attend our Community Celebration sponsored by Rockwell Collins on Saturday, April 14 at our Downtown Library. A representative from The Dollywood Foundation will be attending!

• Make a gift to the Library Foundation in support of this program. The cost is approximately $25/year for one child. Your donation will give the gift of literacy to children in our community.

Thank you to our Imagination Library first-year donors!
Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation
Community Investment Fund
Program Fund
Altosifo, Inc. Fund
Bloomhall Family Fund
Diamond V Fund
McGrath Family of Dealships
The Accel Group
Alliant Energy Foundation
Bankers Trust
Barbara & Art Fearn
FUSE- Cedar Rapids ILLMC
The Gazette
Stacey Halyard
Linn County Witwer Trust
John & Laura Locher
Mercy Medical Center
Rockwell Collins
Theisen’s More For Your Community Fund
TrueNorth Companies
Wells Fargo

Please join our Library Foundation to learn more about Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library and hear from author Matt de la Peña, whose book Last Stop on Market Street is a new 2018 Imagination Library selection.
Monday, April 9, 5:30 to 7:30 pm
Downtown Library, Beems Auditorium
Doors Open at 5:30 pm
Program Starts at 6 pm
Tickets $25
Purchase Options
Online: bit.ly/growinglibrary
Check: payable to CRPLF, 450 5th Ave SE, CR, IA 52401
Credit Card: call Alicia at 319.739.0443

Limited Seating. Advanced Purchase Required.
Light Appetizers & Beverages.

Your $25 ticket covers the cost of books for a year for one child and is 100% tax deductible.

Thank you to our generous presenting sponsors:

BankersTrust. TrueNorth

Bravo, Bravo, Bravo, Bravissimo
Friends is very proud to share the recognition bestowed upon two of our most loyal and dedicated volunteers, Jan Frischkorn and Debbie Schroeder. At the last CRPL Board of Trustees Meeting, these two deserving women were recognized with a Resolution of Thanks noting their contribution to the Library.

For years too numerous to count, Jan Frischkorn and Debbie Schroeder have devoted MUCH of their free time to the Friends of the Library sorting center. From getting Basement Books organized in the Cherry Building to overseeing the sorting center at the Downtown Library, both of these women have diligently and lovingly kept things in order. In addition to training volunteer sorters, Jan and Debbie wisely enlisted the help of their spouses who are mainstays in selling books online (Thank you, Dwight Schroeder!) and stocking & driving the Friends’ book wagon (Thank you, Don Frischkorn!) Jan and Debbie are sorting center stalwarts!

Friends couldn’t agree more nor could we be more proud or appreciative of the continuing effort and talent of these two women.
Focus on Friends

Book Clubs Save Lives, Sometimes

In January, I knew I would be driving to and from Evansville, IN, not once, but twice. That’s about 32 hours in the car. To avoid the long stretches of southern Illinois with no radio reception, I used the fabulous service, through the Cedar Rapids Public Library, called Overdrive. I chose a book that I had failed to read some years ago along with the rest of my book club, shame on me, and simply downloaded it on my phone. The book was *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* (soon to be released as a movie). I loved the book. It reminded me of the importance of book clubs to their members. I don’t want to be a spoiler, and so I won’t detail how that book club began, but it saved lives, literally.

Maybe your book club hasn’t literally saved lives, but it may have been a life-saver in more subtle ways. This thought rekindled my interest in book clubs, wondering if they are still going strong in Cedar Rapids. Sure enough, they are, and several of them at our own Library are open to anyone!

Here’s what can be found on the Library website, www.crlibrary.org/resources/services/bookclubkits. The library currently supports three book clubs, providing a place to meet, volunteers to lead the club, and often the book being read. These clubs are open to the public.

Book Lover’s Club meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6:30pm at Ladd Library; Witwer Book Club meets the 1st Tuesday of each month at 10:00am at the Downtown Library; and Women’s Studies Reading Group meets the 1st Thursday of the month at 6:30pm in the Conference Room at the Downtown Library.

In addition, the library has “Book Club Kits” which typically include multiple copies of a book, sometimes in large print or on CD. Also on the website are book summaries and reviews. Currently there are 209 kits available to check out.

A recently launched on-line book club is “Now Read This,” sponsored by PBS News-NY Times. The club currently has 47,485 members! The mission is to select a book “that helps us make sense of the world we’re living in – fiction, history, memoir, and more.” If you are interested, you can sign-up for their newsletter at: www.pbs.org/newshour/artsiwhat-is-now-read-this, or join their Facebook group. The book for March is *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid. I also happened upon the world’s largest “meeting and discussing” book club with more than 600 chapters. This club was founded in 2000 by Kathy Murphy when she opened her business, the only hair salon/book store in world. Kathy and her club have been featured on GMA, Oxygen Network, *The Wall Street Journal*, and many more. This looks like wild fun! Find this club at: www.thepulpwoodqueens.com.

The final offering that I might suggest is Book Browse. This site describes itself as “Your home for exceptional books,” and has information about great books, book club information, reviews, lists, authors, a blog, the list goes on. You can find this at www.bookbrowse.com. I quickly found myself clicking from one page to another. There is so much interesting information on this website for those interested in book clubs or just interested in “exceptional books.”

Back to my original point, if you are interested in book clubs or literary societies, wish to join one or start one, there are many resources for you. If you already have a great book club, we would love to hear about it. Book clubs may not always save lives, but they promote reading and literacy while providing a common and bonding experience for their members.

Celebrating Vintage Books

Many of us have stacks of vintage books. Some might be from our grandparents, and some from our own childhood. These books may be suffering from old age and have become unusable. It’s difficult to part with these treasures from our past. The Friends of the Library shares that quandary with many of you. Friends often receives donations of vintage books. Many of those books line our shelves and are available for purchase by the public. But often, we receive books that are no longer readable. What to do with these books always presents a dilemma.

Enter… Sarah Benesh. Sarah creates beautiful repurposed books from books that have outlived their readability. Sarah shared her thoughts about her recent endeavor in designing and creating books and journals.

“I’ve been interested in making books for probably 6 years or so. It all started with a love of paper and color and a wonderful book on how to make books. It has morphed into quite a passion that I can’t shake off. The style of hand-bound journal I make is unique and still evolving.”

“I use as much repurposed material for my books as possible. The library came to mind when I was trying to come up with sources for covers. The Friends of the Library have been able to provide me with all the covers from books that I need. It makes me happy to be able to go in and get hardcovers from books that are no longer serving a purpose to the public. It lengthens the life of each book a bit longer and saves a few trees in the meantime. I am very grateful to have made this great connection with the Library and Friends.”

Friends is also grateful for the connection. It helps us place books that might otherwise be recycled never to be seen again. We are interested in knowing if any of you have a pathway for extending the life of your vintage books. Share your ideas on our Facebook page.

By Barb Rhame

If you want to find out more about Sarah and her books, you can contact her at sarahdpt489@msn.com
Speaking of Sales

Friends of the Library would like to thank everyone who attended either or both: The Annual Fall Book Sale in November and the Very Cherry Holiday Book Sale in December. These events comprise a major portion of our fundraising efforts for the year and the success of these events depends on you.

Some of the highlights of the November sale included the first time that local authors joined us providing signed copies of their books for sale. It was a great opportunity for them to meet the public, and we look forward to inviting them to join us again this November. The Friends’ Board enlisted Mt. Mercy business students to develop a customer survey to assist us in strategic planning to better meet your needs. We look forward to sharing those results with you. Finally, the Sunday “Books by the Box,” resulted in hundreds of books carried out the door. We hope to continue improving the experience of the Annual Fall Book Sale. Mark your calendar for November 2, 3, and 4, 2018. Only eight months to go!

The 2017 Very Cherry Holiday on December 2 was more fun than ever before. Kudos to the organizers of the event as it attracted a big crowd. Some of the new features for this year included costumed elevator operators, one of whom was dressed as a glamorous chicken. Typically a slightly scary industrial elevator, the space was transformed into a cozy ride up and down, with a table and chairs and snacks. Upon each arrival on a floor, the chicken alerted the passengers with a melodic “b’gawk!” What fun! Again, Friends were privileged to have the participation of local authors who brightened the downstairs hallway with their book displays. We look forward to the event again this year.

Our heartfelt thanks to our patrons, whose participation at our sales supports the ongoing work of Friends. Mark your calendars for the Annual Fall Book Sale, it will be here sooner than you think.

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Focus on Friends

Just another Saturday at the Friends Book Sale…..Not!

Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library would like to invite you to its “First Saturday of the Month Book Sale.” Throughout the year, on the first Saturday of the month, Friends’ volunteers gather the best books from the sorting room, set up tables, and prepare a feast of books for your reading pleasure.

The sale is presented at the Downtown Library in the commons throughout most of the year, but moves outdoors when the Farmers’ Market season begins. The indoor sale begins at 9:00am, when the Library opens, and remains open until 2:00pm. The outdoor sale runs from 7:30am to Noon. A wide range of books and media is displayed for purchase. The prices are great and the selection is beyond compare. An additional service that Friends can regularly offer on our sale days is a visit to the sorting room to explore the stacks of additional books available for purchase.

But, don’t just come for the book sale. There is always so much more going on at the Library. During the sale on Saturday, March 3, the Library hosted the “Community Cultural Celebration & Expo.” In addition to being able to shop for great bargains with the Friends, one could enjoy music, dancing, exhibits, and so much more.

Mark your calendar and plan to join us for our “First Saturday of the Month Book Sale.”
Events

**Imagination Library Fundraiser**
Monday, April 9
5:30 to 7:30 pm
Beems Auditorium, Downtown
$25/person; registration required

**An Evening with Matt de la Pena,**
**Author of Last Stop on Market Street**
Tuesday, April 10
6:30 to 7:15 pm
Whipple Auditorium, Downtown

**Imagination Library Community Celebration**
Saturday, April 14
10 am to Noon
Downtown Library

**Virtual Reality for Everyone**
Thursday, May 3
4:30 to 6:30 pm
Downtown Library

**Virtual Reality for Everyone**
Thursday, May 17
4:30 to 6:30 pm
Ladd Library

**Summer Dare Kickoff Party**
Saturday, June 2
10 am to Noon
Ladd Library

**First Saturday Book Sales**
Monthly
9 am to 2 pm
Downtown Library

Please visit [www.crlibrary.org](http://www.crlibrary.org) to see details and a complete list of programs.