



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BOOKS & BREW FUNDRAISER SUPPORTS IMAGINATION LIBRARY OF FAYETTE COUNTY, COMMUNITY-FUNDED PROGRAM PROVIDES FREE BOOKS TO NEARLY 1,400 LOCAL CHILDREN

Uniontown, PA - The Imagination Library of Fayette County, also known as First Books Fayette, will host its annual Books & Brew fundraiser on February 4, 2026, at Yough River Brewing, inviting residents, businesses, and community leaders to support one of the county's most impactful early-childhood initiatives. Proceeds from the event directly fund the local delivery of free, age-appropriate books to children from birth through age five.

"When a child opens a book at home each month, they're not just receiving a story, they're receiving encouragement, confidence, and a head start that can shape their entire future," said Christy Fusco, Director of the Uniontown Public Library. "Fundraisers like Books & Brew is how Fayette County makes that happen, and every ticket, sponsorship, and donation directly puts books directly into the hands of our youngest learners."

The Imagination Library of Fayette County operates as a local partner of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, a nationally recognized early literacy program that promotes reading from the very beginning of life. While the program benefits from a national framework and curated book selections, all books distributed to children in Fayette County are funded entirely through local fundraising efforts.

"This program is 100% powered by our community," said Doug Decker, PhD, CEO of Laurel College of Technology and Laurel Technical Institute, and local board volunteer. "Dolly Parton's Imagination Library gives us the framework, but Fayette County provides the funding, and that's something we should be proud of. Early literacy is not a 'nice extra.' It's the foundation of school success and workforce readiness, and it starts long before kindergarten."

First launched in Fayette County in 2007, the program initially served children in the Uniontown Area School District. In 2025, the Imagination Library expanded countywide, resulting in rapid enrollment growth, from approximately 500 children to nearly 1,400 children across 52 municipalities and eight school districts.

To date, the program has delivered more than 100,000 books to Fayette County homes and is expected to reach 150,000 books by late 2026. Nearly 3,200 children have already completed the program, many with younger siblings now enrolled.

Children receive one book per month, mailed directly to their homes. The curriculum is intentionally designed to align with early childhood development milestones, beginning with sensory-rich board books and progressing to storytelling, problem-solving, and school-readiness themes by age five.

“In early childhood, we see it every day, the children who are read to regularly come in with stronger vocabulary, better focus, and more confidence with language,” said Shujuane Martin, CEO/President of the Private Industry Council, and local board volunteer. “When books are already part of a child’s home routine, they arrive at school ready to learn. The Imagination Library gives families an easy, consistent way to build those skills from birth, and Books & Brew helps make sure that support reaches every corner of Fayette County.”

Early literacy programs are vital as Fayette County faces persistent literacy challenges. According to 2023 Pennsylvania Department of Education PSSA results, fewer than 60% of third-grade students in most local school districts are proficient in reading. Several districts fall below 50%, highlighting the need for early intervention before children enter kindergarten.

Early literacy is closely tied to long-term academic success, workforce readiness, and economic stability. Research consistently shows that the first five years of life are critical for language development, comprehension, and confidence, skills that shape future learning and career outcomes.

The Imagination Library addresses this challenge by removing barriers to access and encouraging families to read together, fostering both literacy skills and a lifelong love of learning. The program is made possible through the leadership of dedicated volunteer board members, in partnership with the Redstone Foundation of Fayette County and the Uniontown Public Library.

Every book delivered in Fayette County is made possible through local donations, sponsorships, grants, and critical fundraising events like Books & Brew. These efforts are essential to sustaining and expanding the program, ensuring that every child in the county has the opportunity to begin life with access to books. Books & Brew brings the community together in a relaxed, social setting while advancing a powerful mission: investing in early literacy as a foundation for lifelong success.

As enrollment continues to grow, so does the community’s role in meeting this need. A gift of just \$35 provides a child with books for an entire year, while \$175 supports a child’s complete five-year journey from birth to kindergarten, an investment that strengthens not only individual lives, but the future workforce and economic vitality of Fayette County.

“If we want a stronger workforce in Fayette County, we have to start earlier than job training, we have to start with reading,” said Devan White, Financial Advisor, Wealth Enhancement Group, and local board volunteer. “Literacy is the foundation of all skills employers need, from communication to problem-solving. Supporting the Imagination Library through Books & Brew is one of the most practical investments we can make in our future employees, our local economy, and our community’s success.”

A trained, capable workforce begins with basic literacy, and literacy begins at birth. Community members and businesses are encouraged to attend Books & Brew, become sponsors, or make a direct contribution to support the Imagination Library of Fayette County.

Donations and sponsorships can be made through the Redstone Foundation:
65 West Main Street | Uniontown, PA 15401
Phone: (724) 437-4571
Email: info@fayettechamber.com
Online giving/event tickets: www.fayettechamberstore.com

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.org.

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