



Media contact:

Elaine Zukerman
Communications Manager
Durham's Partnership for Children
919-403-6960, ext. 221
elaine@dpfc.net

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 8, 2018

Durham's Partnership for Children launches new literacy initiatives for young children in Durham County

Durham, NC – Durham's Partnership for Children (the Partnership), a Smart Start Initiative, announces the launch of two new initiatives to strengthen early literacy and support young children and families in Durham. The initiatives, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and Reach Out and Read, are both made possible through funding from the North Carolina Partnership for Children and will help the Partnership achieve its mission of ensuring all children enter school ready to succeed.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) and Smart Start are working together to get new, age-appropriate books into the hands of North Carolina's youngest children through funding provided by the North Carolina General Assembly. During the 2017 legislative session, North Carolina state lawmakers included \$3.5 million in the first year of the budget and \$7 million in the second year for the Smart Start network to offer free books through DPIL to children across the state. The Partnership leads this effort in Durham County. DPIL is a program created to foster a love of reading among children age birth to five through the gift of a specially selected book delivered right to their home each month.

"I'm thrilled that my Imagination Library is going to be offered to so many children in North Carolina" stated Dolly Parton, the founder of DPIL. "Working together we can help children dream more, learn more, care more, and be more."

Registration for DPIL is now open for all children birth to age 5 who reside in Durham County. Each month, a new book will be mailed directly to each child, at no cost or obligation to the family. Families can learn more, check eligibility, and register a child by visiting [www:dpfc.net/imaginationlibrary](http://www.dpfc.net/imaginationlibrary).

Reach Out and Read (ROR) is a national program that supports doctors in their efforts to foster healthy bonding and brain development. During well-child visits, pediatricians use books as part of the exam as they "prescribe" reading daily with young children and families. The Partnership is one of eighteen Smart Start local partnerships that received funding to provide or expand ROR in their communities.

The Partnership obtained new Smart Start funding to help strengthen ROR at Duke Children's Primary Care Southpoint and Lincoln Community Health Center, working with these medical practices to promote early brain development, literacy and school readiness in pediatric exam rooms and waiting rooms. This includes giving free books to children, as well as guidance for parents about the importance of reading aloud and building a strong foundation for learning. ROR also occurs at the Duke Children's Primary Care Roxboro Road clinic.

Early literacy plays a key role in all Partnership programs and is a crucial part of a child's development, as it enhances vocabulary, builds important communication skills, and gives them the tools they need to be successful in school and in life.

“Reading aloud is the single most important thing you can do to help a child prepare for reading and learning on their own,” says Partnership Executive Director Laura Benson. “Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library and Reach Out and Read both encourage a lifelong love of books and are two exciting new tools in our broader efforts to achieve school readiness for all children in Durham.”

To learn more about these initiatives and other Partnership programs, please visit www.dpfc.net.

About Durham’s Partnership for Children – Preparing our children to succeed.

Founded in 1994 and first funded in 1995 to administer the Smart Start grant in Durham County, the Partnership works as an independent, local nonprofit that serves young children birth to age 5 and their families to ensure that all children enter school healthy and ready to succeed. For more than 20 years, the Partnership has helped parents pay for child care, improved the quality of child care and provided health and family support services to thousands of Durham County families with young children. The Partnership leverages the public and private sectors to achieve its mission: *To ensure every child in Durham enters school ready to succeed, we lead community strategies for children birth to 5 and their families that promote healthy development and learning and enhance access to high quality care.* The Partnership administers Smart Start, NC Pre-K, and Early Head Start in Durham County. For more information about the Partnership, visit www.dpfc.net or call 919-403-6960, ext. 221.

Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library is a book gifting program for children from birth to age five. The mission of the program is to foster a love of reading in preschool children and ensure that every child born has books, regardless of their family’s income.

Reach Out and Read Carolinas is an evidence-based intervention for children birth to 5 that makes early literacy a standard part of primary care with a special emphasis on children who grow up in low-income communities. The Reach Out and Read model is endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the program has one of the strongest records of research support of any primary care intervention. Reach Out and Read Carolinas serves over 305,000 children at over 400 clinical locations.

###