



United Way of
Cumberland County

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT INFORMATION:

United Way of Cumberland County
Scott Embry
Executive Director
910-438-1179 x 222
director@unitedway-cc.org

United Way of Cumberland County Expands Dolly Parton Imagination Library to Include Military Families Providing Free Books to Every Child Born at Womack Army Medical Center

Fayetteville, N.C. (November 1, 2024) - The United Way of Cumberland County is proud to announce the expansion of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to include military families. Through this initiative, every child born at Womack Army Medical Center will receive a free book and gain access to a program designed to foster early literacy skills.

This gift, in addition to our Cape Fear Valley Health partnership that launched earlier this year, will ensure that **100%** of the children born in Cumberland County are given the opportunity to learn early literacy skills, increasing their potential for educational success.

Through the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, operated in collaboration with Smart Start and Partnership for Children, every child born in Cumberland County will have access to a free monthly book through age 5. Currently, the program provides over 10,000 children in Cumberland County with a monthly book. This recurring gift from the United Way of Cumberland County and our generous donors to the families at Womack Army Medical Center will ensure that every newborn leaves the hospital with the program's first book, *The Little Engine That Could*.

- more -

100% of Children Born in Cumberland County to Receive Free Books

Key Features of the New Expansion:

- **First Book for Every Newborn:** Starting November 2024, every newborn at Womack Army Medical Center will receive "The Little Engine That Could" before leaving the hospital.
- **Guided Enrollment:** Womack Army Medical Center staff will assist parents with the enrollment process for the Imagination Library

This initiative will set an estimated **550 newborns every month** in Cumberland County on a path to educational success by fostering early literacy and a love of reading.

The Impact of Early Childhood Reading

Research, such as the study "When Children Are Not Read to at Home: The Million Word Gap" from the College of Education and Human Ecology, The Ohio State University, highlights the critical role of early literacy. The study found that children who are read to daily hear an estimated 78,000 words per year. Over five years, this translates to a cumulative 1.4 million more words compared to children who are never read to. This exposure is vital in bridging the Word Gap and fostering better educational outcomes.

About the Dolly Parton Imagination Library

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library provides free, age-appropriate books to children from birth to age five. By receiving a new book each month, children can enjoy exciting reading adventures that boost their early education. This initiative, funded at a cost of \$2.20 per child for books and mailing in Cumberland County, ensures every child has access to books regardless of their family's financial situation.

We are excited about this new expansion with Womack Army Medical Center and the positive impact it will have on the lives of children in our community. Our goal is to continue this monthly gift to Womack Army Medical Center for the coming years, making ongoing improvements to better serve our community. Together, we are committed to creating a brighter future for the children of Cumberland County.

For more information about the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, please visit <https://www.unitedway-cc.org/what-we-do/initiatives/dolly-partons-imagination-library.html>.

###

United Way of Cumberland County

Our mission is to improve lives across Cumberland County by strategically raising and investing resources that successfully impact prioritized human service and health needs while working in effective and innovative partnerships with direct provider agencies. To learn more visit <https://www.unitedway-cc.org/>

About Womack Army Medical Center

Womack Army Medical Center (WAMC) is dedicated to Medal of Honor recipient Pfc. Bryant Homer Womack, a courageous medic who gave his life tending to the wounds of his fellow soldiers in 1952. WAMC provides health care to about 200,000 TRICARE beneficiaries, including active duty service men and women, retirees, and their family members. WAMC is a state-of-the-art medical complex and an integral component of Fort Liberty's military mission. For more information, visit www.womack.tricare.mil