



Year in Review 2013

At the center of every replication of the Imagination Library one can always find a person whose joy, passion, determination and skill drive the process from idea to reality. We call these folks Champions but in all honesty "hero" may be a much better word. Heroes seem larger than life and achieve outcomes that at face value seem improbable. Our own Dolly Parton has achieved results that are far beyond heroic as her journey from east Tennessee to international fame somehow stepped over, under or around every obstacle that could be placed in front of her.

Replication of the Imagination Library is not an easy task. Yet year after year hundreds of our Heroes decide to make the dream of the Imagination Library their own. So as we briefly describe the successes of 2013 be always mindful that beneath the impressive numbers and the impressive stories of success, there always lies a heart of a Hero.

The numbers, as always, are impressive. In 2013, 8.36 million books were distributed and at the end of the year 735,000 children were receiving a book each month. The total books since inception surpassed 55,000,000. Yet numbers are just metrics, the stories of success are revelations.

In Canada, the entire year was focused on one primary objective: to bring the Imagination Library to all of the First Nation children living in 62 reserve communities throughout Manitoba. Through the generosity and kindness of many public and private organizations approximately 80% of all the funds needed to support the program for 5 years were secured. Ultimately 7,000 children will be enrolled in the program in 2014 and 2015. This marked the first time a provincial wide program for First Nation children was achieved.

Across the sea, the United Kingdom experienced the greatest net growth in new children since the program was launched in Rotherham. Propelled by the exciting growth in North Lincolnshire, the total number of children enrolled each month surpassed 25,000 and brought the total number of books distributed in the UK to just short of 1,000,000. Other notable achievements include an employer based program with Royal Mail and strong interest from Housing Associations.

In Australia, a partnership with the United Way led to a pilot effort with several communities which will ultimately launch a national program in 2014.

Finally, in the USA efforts in Erie, Pennsylvania and Greene County, Ohio continue to teach us that communities can do anything they commit to do. The same can be said at the state level as Arkansas, North Dakota, South Carolina and Mississippi took significant steps toward the goal of establishing statewide programs.

In June, two hundred of our Heroes gathered in Pigeon Forge to share, to laugh and to celebrate. Some participants brought their vision while others offered their experience and their creativity. Some brought their sheer determination and still others shared their unbridled joy. But all of them brought one special gift — they brought with them the heart of a Hero.

