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Free Local Book Program Reaches 2,000 kids

A celebration for the Imagination Library free book program

FIRST 5 Mendocino and the Willits Public Library teamed up to celebrate two years of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Mendocino County and announce that 2,000 children receive a brand new, age appropriate book in the mail each month through this free book program.

FIRST 5 Mendocino brought Imagination Library to the County in April of 2009. Since the launch, over 34,000 books have been mailed to the homes of participating children.

"Introducing books to children is the most important key to early school success. With this program, we're getting books directly into the homes of Mendocino County kids and fostering a love of books from the start," said Imagination Library Coordinator Melanie Underhill.

The '2,000 Kids and Going Strong' celebration took place Thursday, April 28 at the Willits children's story time hour with children's librarian Ina Gordon.

Local musician Richard Jeske from North Coast Opportunities, and his musical companion strummed well known children's songs on the guitar and a special song he wrote about Willits that sings, 'You know you're almost home, when you're comin' down the hill'. Underhill, the Imagination Library Program Coordinator and AmeriCorps VISTA member read the story "*Potter the Otter a Tale about Water*" and gave a copy of the book to each child to take home.

The program is offered to **all** children ages 0-5 living in Mendocino County; in return FIRST 5 Mendocino encourages parents to spend 20 minutes a day reading with their children. Parents can enroll their child on-line at www.MendoChildren.org or by calling 707-462-4453.

Caption for photo: Three year old attendee, Julian Avedis-River (picture above) has been in the program two years, and has a collection of almost 25 Imagination Library books. He shared that his favorite Imagination Library book is "*Llama Llama Red Pajama*".



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