A Letter for our Parents

DEAR PARENT,

With the goal of providing every child in Hillsborough County with early learning opportunities, the Imagination Library of Hillsborough County Partnership is pleased to deliver to you the first edition of Imagination Quarterly. This e-newsletter is full of valuable information designed to support your child’s early-learning experience while keeping you connected to what’s happening around your community through the Imagination Library program. Inside you’ll find a program update, early literacy tips, information on upcoming parent workshops, and a special tribute to our program partners. Enjoy!

SINCERELY,
The Imagination Library of Hillsborough County Partnership
813-272-5017
EARLY LITERACY TIPS

Children who enjoy books will want to learn to read. Check out these tips to make reading fun, courtesy of Hillsborough County Public Library Cooperative’s Early Literacy program.

• Read to your child at least 15 minutes every day.
• Always make books a positive experience.
• Read things that will interest your child.
• Read when your child is attentive and playful.
• Let your child see you reading.
• Visit your library to get a variety of books.
• Do not discourage any use of books.
• Take books on errands and in the car.

PROGRAM NEWS

The Imagination Library of Hillsborough County today has registered over 9,000 children who will now receive new age-appropriate books each month free as part of the early literacy initiative designed to boost school readiness skills and promote life-long learning. “With help from all of our partners, this program has been a tremendous success. I look forward to seeing this program continue to grow because it positively impacts families within our community,” said Joe Stines, Director of Hillsborough County Library Services. On September 1, 2006, the Imagination Library program was launched and piloted within six zip codes in Hillsborough County. Since that time, the program has grown to become one of the largest in the country. “Since going countywide with our program, we have seen a tremendous response and I’m excited that Imagination Library truly is making a difference in the lives of parents and young babies,” said Diana Baker, CEO of United Way of Tampa Bay. The partnership is comprised of key organizations within Hillsborough County working together to coordinate the program; partners include Children’s Board, Early Learning Coalition, Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough County, Head Start/Early Head Start, Hillsborough County Children's Services, Hillsborough County Public Schools, Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library Cooperative, United States Postal Service-Tampa, United Way of Tampa Bay, and University of South Florida.
**Family Success Story**

For Cheryl and Phil, of Brandon, Imagination Library helps them read to their children for an average of 45 minutes a day, depending on their schedules. Both their daughters—Zoe, 2, and Audrey, 7 months—are enrolled in the program, so books have been showing up in their mailbox left and right. Cheryl spoke with us about Imagination Library.

**What do you most appreciate about the program?**

We appreciate the program tremendously. It has made a difference in both our daughters. They love the books. They’re more communicative as a result. Audrey, the youngest, when we read the books, you can tell she’s excited. She’ll try and eat the books; she’s at that age. She’ll also fling her arm at the books. It’s just a sign of her being excited and interested in the colorful pictures. My older daughter, Zoe, she loves the books, too. She has definitely been more talkative as a result. Her favorite is The Mine-O-Saur (by Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen and David Clark). That was the one that she really gravitated towards. It introduced her to dinosaurs, which she’s now interested in, as I guess many kids can be. She also received a plastic dinosaur for Christmas, and she named it Mine-O after that book, which surprised me.

**What other effects have you noticed from storytime?**

Referring back to that same book The Mine-O-Saur, it also teaches the value of sharing, which is so important now because or younger daughter is starting to be interested in our older daughter’s toys. She’ll grab them and try to eat them, as is typical of her age. But my older daughter doesn’t quite know how to respond. Her instinct is, “Waiting a second. I was playing with this toy, and she just took it from me.” We can definitely refer to the story. My husband says he refers to it when they’re playing, and it seems to strike a chord with my 2-year-old. She remembers the lesson taught in that book and is now seeing how it plays out—that she has to share her toys. So that book has been especially helpful for introducing that concept to her.

**How do you find the time to read to the girls?**

It can be challenging, as I’m sure it is for most busy parents. I’m currently nursing my 7-month-old, and so when I’m nursing I’ll gather the 2-year-old and we can have story time while doing that. In addition, we have a bedtime ritual where we read books.

**What suggestions can you offer people who say they’re too busy to read to their kids?**

Really make it a priority. It’s integrated into our bedtime ritual. We put on pajamas, brush teeth, and then we read books, say our prayers, go to bed. … Another tip is to keep books throughout the home so that they’re convenient. When you’re making dinner you’re stirring something on the stove. When you put it aside, you can flip through a book really quickly while wait for the next step when you’re making dinner. Have books in your living room, in your bedroom, everywhere to make it convenient. My 2-year-old likes books so much, she’ll bring us a book. She sees the books out on display, and so she’ll bring it to us.

**Is there anything else you’d like to mention about the program?**

My older daughter asks every day if there will be a book in the mail. She loves taking walks, and on top of that she loves checking the mail to see if there will be a new book for her. She’ll ask if there’s a book or mail for her sister, as well.
A TRIBUTE TO OUR PARTNERS

THE IMAGINATION LIBRARY OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY PARTNERSHIP WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL OF OUR PARTNERS AND FRIENDS WHO HELP SUPPORT THIS PROGRAM THROUGH FINANCIAL AND IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS. YOUR SUPPORT HELPS TO RAISE READERS IN OUR COMMUNITY!

ORGANIZATIONS

Centro Mi Diario
Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County
ENLACE Florida
Friends of Austin Davis Library, Odessa
Friends of the Bruton Memorial Library, Plant City
Friends of the Library of New Tampa
Friends of the Library of Tamp-Hillsborough
Friends of the Library Riverview Branch
Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough County
Hillsborough County Children’s Services
Hillsborough County Head Start/Early Head Start
Hillsborough County Public Schools
Kiwanis Club of Plant City
ParentGuide Magazine
Rotary Club of Tampa Upper Bay
Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Tampa
Tampa Tribune
Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library Cooperative
The Children’s Board of Hillsborough County
United States Postal Service - Tampa
United Way of Tampa Bay
University of South Florida
WQYK Radio

INDIVIDUALS

Ann M. Fleury, Riverview
Anne M. Langenfeld, Centralia, IL
Anthony Carswell, Tampa
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Barbara A. Smith, Oldsmar
Carol F. York, Tampa
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Christine M. Caffray-Kreines, Valrico
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Plant City Rotary Club
Richard Jewett, Tampa
Sandra Hartley, Tampa
Starbucks Coffee, Tampa
Susan M. Foster, Tampa
Temetia Creed, Tampa
Tracy L. Tedder, Brandon
Wendy Kuhnast, Lakeland
STORY TIME: If you liked...

The first book every Imagination Library participant receives is *The Little Engine that Could* by Watty Piper and Loren Long. If your family enjoyed that title, then you may also like these books about trains.

*Chugga-Chugga Choo-Choo* by Kevin Lewis  
Baby/preschool

*Freight Train* by Donald Crews  
Baby/preschool

*Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel* by Virginia Lee Burton  
Ages 4 to 8

*Steam, Smoke and Steel: Back in Time with Trains* by Patrick O’Brien  
Ages 4 to 8

*I Dream of Trains* by Angela Johnson  
Ages 4 to 8

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**Born Learning**

Hitting the supermarket is obviously a chore, especially at the end of a busy day. But grocery stores also offer many opportunities for learning that can make time there less trying. The next time you and your child are out shopping, try these ideas from [BornLearning.org](http://BornLearning.org).

• Take a snack to the market so you and your child aren’t too hungry and can focus on other things.  
• Notice what your child is interested in to help make food shopping a fun learning time together.

**For your baby:** The market is like a collage in motion—there is so much going on. Talk about the things you see as you shop.

**For your toddler:** Talk to your child in advance about a special thing he or she can buy at the market, then look for it, like a treasure hunt. This helps your child learn to be a good observer. Also ask about the colors he or she sees, and ask your toddler to name things that are up high or down low. In addition, give your child a cracker or piece of apple, then point out the crackers or apples in the store.

**For your preschooler:** Cut out a picture of the item you’re going to purchase and have your son or daughter match the picture with the real item on the store’s shelf. Also have your child look at food labels to identify no-nos like sugar.

All these activities can build pre-reading and thinking skills. For more suggestions, visit [BornLearning.org](http://BornLearning.org).
Consider donating to the Imagination Library of Hillsborough County today. Your support will help more families benefit from this great program.

HERES HOW TO DONATE
There are two ways you can donate to the Imagination Library.

ONLINE CREDIT CARD
Your credit card donation will be processed by PayPal, one of the most trusted names in Internet-based credit card processing.
https://fs7.formsite.com/unitedwaytampabay/formimaginationlibrary/secure_index.html

MAIL YOUR DONATION
Check made payable to “United Way of Tampa Bay Inc.” can be mailed to
United Way of Tampa Bay
5201 W. Kennedy Blvd., Suite 600
Tampa, FL 33609
Attn: Finance Dept.
All donations are tax deductible. Your charitable receipt will come to you from the United Way of Tampa Bay, the fiscal agent for the Imagination Library of Hillsborough County

Upcoming parent workshops

Reading = Success
When: Saturday, February 21, 2009, 11:00 a.m.
Where: College Hill Library, 2607 Martin Luther King Blvd., Tampa, FL 33610
Parents, come learn about the benefits of the Imagination Library and how you can make reading an enjoyable experience for your child. We will provide information on the Early Literacy skills and ways to better prepare your child for kindergarten. Parents of preschoolers welcome. Free food and free books provided.
Cost: Free
Hosted by: Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library/Early Literacy
For more information: Call (813) 273-3759.

Family Fun Play and Learn Workshop
When: Saturday, March 14, 2009, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Where: Town N’ Country Regional Public Library, 7606 Paula Drive, Tampa, FL 33615
Parents and children ages 0-3 will enjoy this program filled with age appropriate toys, crafts, music and silly stories that will allow families to learn more about the importance of early literacy and play. Come join us for this interactive workshop that will certainly be fun and entertaining for both parent and child. Snacks will be provided.
Cost: Free
Hosted by: Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library/Early Literacy
For more information: Call (813) 273-3759

Week of the Young Child
When: Saturday, April 4, 2009, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (come anytime during these hours)
Where: Al Lopez Park, 4810 N Himes Ave., Tampa, FL 33614
Don’t miss this Family Fun Day celebration with activities, games, crafts, entertainment and clowns.
Cost: Free
Hosted by: Early Learning Coalition, Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library/Early Literacy, Hillsborough County Head Start, Hillsborough County Child Care Licensing and various other community partners.

Raising a Reader!
When: Friday, April 24, 2009, 9:00 a.m. to noon.
Where: Manhattan Center, 4210 Bay Villa Ave., Tampa, FL 33611
You may think that it is too early to start thinking about preparing your young child for school. But now is the time to start. Discover some exciting activities you can do with your child to get them ready for school. Learn how to add more fun while using the Imagination Library books you have been receiving.
Cost: $27 for the general public. $20 for Early Childhood Council members.
Hosted by: Early Childhood Council
For more information: (813) 837-7753