

MEDIA RELEASE

20,000 books delivered to children in Glenelg Shire

United Way Glenelg (UWG) has reached the incredible milestone of sending its 20,000th book to preschool-age children living in the Glenelg Shire.

This milestone was celebrated with Mayor Cr Anita Rank reading the children's book *Koala Lou* to children attending the story time session at Glenelg Libraries, 11.00am. A small craft activity was followed along with the cutting of a cake and fruit platter shared amongst the attendees.

United Way Glenelg was thrilled to share the celebration with the Portland Library who plays an important role in providing free access to children's literacy resources and programs.

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library is an initiative of UWG in partnership with Portland Aluminium. The inaugural three year partnership was launched in 2013 by then Victorian Premier Dr Denis Napthine. Each month, the program places a new book in the hands of families with children from birth to age five for FREE.

"Our dream of providing books to all the children living in the Glenelg Shire is becoming a reality one registration form at a time," said Nicole Angelino, Executive Officer of UWG.

"Sending 20,000 books is just an amazing milestone for us, as we grow this program we are strengthening children, families and our communities."

UWG was joined by representatives from Portland Aluminium, who have just recently signed up for a further two year partnership to support the project; allowing it to reach substantially greater numbers of children. Also to help celebrate the milestone was families and children who benefit from the program as well as service providers and community members.

200 Children have graduated from the program to date with over 400 brand new books mailed out each month.

Among the hundreds who receive the books from the program is little Sarah Dunn of Heywood. Sara's mum Melissah said she loved the generosity of the Imagination Library.

"I found joy reading as a child, and I'm glad that I can give my daughter the opportunity. Being a low income family, it's truly special to us that we have the books arrive to us and it is like a special surprise every month."

"It's a wonderful gift."

Portland Aluminium Plant Manager Peter Chellis said the Dolly Parton Imagination Library is a partnership that he and his team are very proud of and very passionate about.

"Portland Aluminium's partnership philosophy is based on "Education, Opportunity and Leadership", and to have the opportunity and ability to help education the next generation; to give them the best possible start to life is a privilege. I am personally very proud to be involved in the program.

"Portland Aluminium is entering into our fourth year of the partnership, with a fifth to follow in 2018, however it still needs more support. The statistics don't lie, The Dolly Parton Imagination Library is fundamental to the future of our youngest generation and I urge every corporation, every business, every organisation and every

individual to become a sponsor so it can continue well into the future. For it to be sustainable it needs to be embraced and led by the community.”

The program is targeted at vulnerable families but is open to everyone.

If you're interested in donating so more children can receive books please contact Nicole Angelino on 0410513305, email mail@unitedwayglenelg.com.au or go to our website unitedwayglenelg.com.au to donate.

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