

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 10 February 2017

Starting school with the skills to thrive

Last week marked the beginning of school for hundreds of children in the Glenelg Shire.

Last minute uniforms had been purchased, lunch boxes hastily packed and last goodbyes were said in the classroom, however United Way Glenelg and Portland Aluminium have been preparing these children for their first day of school for the last five years.

Launched in July 2013, the Imagination Library provides children from birth to five years old with one book a month equaling 12 books a year, 60 books in total. The books are provided at no cost to the families thanks to the partnership between United Way Glenelg and Portland Aluminium.

Nicole Angelino, Executive Officer, United Way Glenelg said that something as simple as reading can have a major impact on a child's success later in life.

"If we regularly read to children every day we can better prepare them for their first day of school, ready to learn. The evidence is clear that the period from birth to age 5 is critical for brain and language development and more books in the home equals better educational outcomes for children".

Portland Aluminium Plant Manager, Peter Chellis, is passionate about providing educational opportunities at all levels throughout the Glenelg Shire.

"This year PA have again partnered with United Way Glenelg to bring the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to our youngest citizens. This program, now in its fifth year, promotes literacy at such an important age and has been a great success; this program runs in many different locations globally, in Australia, it is here, in the Glenelg Shire where it has the most uptake. However, there are still children on a waiting list who are yet to receive any books – PA has funded the program over **\$80,000** to date and it's still not enough....I encourage everyone who is able to, to pledge your support and sponsor a child to receive a free book a month and give them the best start they can possibly have," he said.

Ethan Mately was only two when he started receiving the books in August of 2013. Last week Ethan started foundation at Portland South Primary School and he is ready to learn! Receiving many books, Ethan has been reading with his parents every day.

"The delivery of the books was a prompt to read every day as Ethan was always interested to learn new stories," said Ethan's mother Joan Pethybridge.

"He has developed a huge interest in books and so keen to start school. We believe the books will give Ethan a great start to school."

The family has donated many of the Imagination Library books to the school so all children can share enjoy and encourage other children to read.

As of 31 January 2017 close to 18,000 books to over 550 children have been delivered to children living in the Glenelg Shire.

For more information On the Dolly Parton Imagination Library including how you can support the program please contact Nicole Angelino on 0410 51 3305 or via email mail@unitedwayglenelg.com.au

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