

# Read to Me

A newsletter for families and others who care about the future of young people.

Volume 1, Issue 2

Spring 2007



## Imagination Library founded in 1996

### Special Points of Interest in this newsletter:

- Dolly Parton's Imagination Library founded in 1996
- Send us your photos
- What does it mean to be an involved dad?
- Making reading a playful experience



United Way of Southwest Minnesota is pleased to be the local sponsor of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program for young children in this area. To date, about 2,100 local children ages birth to 5 years old are enrolled. They receive a delightful hard cover book at home each month in the mail at no cost to the family.

Dolly Parton founded the program in 1996 as a way to get books into the hands of preschool children. The success of it has surprised Ms. Parton.

An article printed in the Chronicle of Philanthropy

quotes her as saying, "The idea goes back to my own childhood. The only book I every really remember at home was the Bible. I have wonderful memories of my Mama pulling out the Bible and reading me stories from it. Those stories took me to faraway places and really gave me the first opportunity to imagine a life outside of these mountains."

The Dollywood Foundation negotiates the costs of buying and mailing the books that are selected by a panel of education and reading experts. "Local champions" like United Way of Southwest Minnesota

sponsor the program locally and are responsible to pay for the books and the mailings, to register children to get the books, and to maintain a database.

Contributors and underwriters of the program are always welcome and that support is greatly appreciated at any time. Contributions can be sent to United Way of Southwest MN, P.O. Box 41, Marshall, MN



### Send Us Your Photos



Help illustrate how children love to read Imagination Library books. Does your child have a favorite book? Do you have a special time to read stories?

**Send a photo (or two) of your child reading with you to United Way of Southwest Minnesota.**  
*Digital photos are best.*

Photos will be displayed at Market Street Mall in Marshall during the Week of the Young Child (April 22-28). Photos may also be included in future "Read to Me" newsletters.

All entries will be entered in a drawing for a pizza and a video rental. Gift certificates will be provided by Papa Murphy's Pizza and Premier Video in Marshall.

**Photo deadline: Monday, April 16, 2007.**

Please email digital photos to: [unitedway@unitedwayswmn.org](mailto:unitedway@unitedwayswmn.org). Print photos can be mailed to: United Way of Southwest Minnesota, 109 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Marshall, MN 56258

**Please include names, ages of children in the photos and parent/caregiver contact information along with the photos.**

**Please keep your address current with United Way of Southwest Minnesota.**

**Imagination Library books** are mailed out at bulk library rates and **can not be forwarded** by the post office. Call us (507-929-2273) or email us ([unitedway@unitedwayswmn.org](mailto:unitedway@unitedwayswmn.org)) right away if your address changes. Even though our office changes the data base immediately upon notification, it takes 6-8 weeks for address changes to go into effect at the publisher.



United Way  
of Southwest Minnesota

**NEW: Register for Imagination Library online at [www.unitedwayswmn.org!!](http://www.unitedwayswmn.org!!)  
Check out the Parent Tool Kit on our web page**

## Fathering - What does it mean to be an involved dad?

The role of dads in the lives of their children has become a hot topic. All of this attention raises an important question: what impact does an involved father have on a child?



Consider this:

- Children with fathers who are involved in their lives tend to develop more self-confidence than children who lack an active father.
- Children with fathers who are involved in their lives tend to be better problem-solvers than children who lack an active father.

Interestingly, it seems that more dads than moms acknowledge the important role that fathers play on their children's healthy development.

From the survey *What Grown-Ups Understand About Child Development*.

Because men tend to interact with their children in unique ways, a mother cannot replace a father's role. However, if a father is not part of a baby's life, the mother can involve other men in her life to help fill the void—including her father, her brother, or male acquaintances to whom she is very close.

From the video *Begin with Love*.



***Your child's recognition of the differences between mother and father care actually enhances his development.***

*Kyle Pruett, MD  
Fatherneed*



A study of 27 preschoolers found that popular children are more likely to have fathers who are physically playful, affectionate and socially engaging and mothers who are highly verbal.

Source: *Bridging the Gap: Parent-Child Play Interaction and Peer Interactive Competence*, Mac Donald and Parke.

## Bits of Understanding

### *Hutt-hutt Wipe!*

### How to get Dad into the game.

Of all the sports around, there is nothing like fatherhood to truly separate the men from the boys.



Think of your family as the most important team you'll ever play on. And you are the starting Dad, with a unique style of playing and nurturing that mom can't duplicate. Naturally, you want to be the best. Cause you know that Dads who are involved make a difference.

Luckily, success in the field is simply a matter of translating talk into action.

### The Game Plan

1. **Define your role.** Infancy provides plenty of opportunity for hands-on dads. Be a player. A diaper changer. A bather. A singer.

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### Websites to check out for more information:

<http://civitas.org/fathering.html>  
<http://www.bornlearning.org>  
<http://www.fathers.com/articles>  
<http://www.babycenter.com/refcap/baby/dadsbaby>  
[http://bits.civitas.org/content/UC\\_fathers.pdf](http://bits.civitas.org/content/UC_fathers.pdf)  
<http://bits.civitas.org/content/dadmeaning.pdf>  
<http://bits.civitas.org/content/dadenglish.pdf>  
<http://www.fatherhood.org>  
<http://www.fathers.com>  
<http://www.parentsasteachers.org>  
<http://www.strongfathers.com>

**Take a preschooler to work** - nothing makes a child feel special like having his own special time with his dad at work. Use a quiet Friday afternoon to show a child around, give him a highlighter and some paper and have him “help” out.



## Bits of understanding

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2. **Step up to the plate.** Get your child dressed, pick him up from school or make meals. When you take on the responsibilities, you earn your family’s respect, and you feel good about yourself.
3. **Play some one-on-one.** Every-day experiences, a trip to the cleaners, a Saturday breakfast, become special when you spend time alone with your children.
4. **Know when to ease up.** Fatherhood is a marathon not a sprint, and you’ll need energy to go the distance. Try to balance work and family, and ask for time to yourself to refuel.



And no matter how ugly it gets, don’t give up. One of the perks of being the Dad is that by simply staying involved, you become the heart and soul of the team.

Taken from Civitas.org

Of all one-on-one time, fathers spend **45%** playing, while mothers only spend **15 - 20%** playing.



## ACTION ITEMS

### Questions of equality



**When it comes to connecting with an infant, does a mother have an advantage over a father because the baby has heard her voice for nine months?**

Surprisingly, mothers do not have this type of advantage, however many men report feeling like strangers to their children at the very beginning. Fathers should not give up hope - the connection will form if they spend time with their child and play a role in her life. After all, parenting is something that both men and women learn through practice and persistence.



**Women tend to play with kids in a more structured manner than men do. Is one style better than the other?**

One of the truths in life is that men and women are different, and that means moms and dads too. A child has just as much fun playing with a father, even if it is not planned out or structured - and the child is learning. By simply allowing a child to be a part of whatever task a father is involved in gives him the chance to explore, learn and bond. Structured time together can be beneficial because kids like routines, but they enjoy spontaneity, too.



**Men, more so than women, tend to encourage persistence when it comes to learning new things. Is it detrimental to be more demanding?**

Research shows that fathers, more than moms, tend to challenge their children and encourage them to be persistent when facing a difficult task, and that such lessons translate into social and academic confidence later in their lives. Although letting a child get too frustrated while trying to accomplish a task can be detrimental to learning, if an adult can figure out just how far to push and when to give in, he will help her understand the benefits of pushing through a hard task and build self-esteem.

An excerpt from the book Understanding Children by Richard Saul Wurman and Civitas © 2002.



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This is a special newsletter for families who are enrolled in Imagination Library.



# Make Reading a Playful Experience

## Learn while having fun



Compiled by Heather Bestge, SMSU Psychology Student

It's not a secret that children love to play; incorporating books into playtime is a great way to get your child to enjoy reading, while having fun. It's also a great opportunity to involve the whole family.

- Babies love being talked to – include eye contact and facial expressions to create social and emotional connections. Mimicking these expressions fosters brain development.
- Make it a family affair by taking turns reading. Children will love the attention and will learn to distinguish tones.
- Make it a cuddling opportunity to build attachment.
- Nursery rhymes are wonderful for learning rhythm and using actions to develop motor skills.
- Bright bold colors and pictures will capture their attention.
- Reading word for word isn't necessary.
- Encourage toddlers to fill in the blanks or to make up their own story.
- Ask questions and let them ask questions.
- Alphabet books are great for preschoolers.
- Have them point out letters in stories and everyday items.
- Grocery shopping and meal preparation are great times to encourage reading. Help children read labels and signs. Use coupons to match products.



*United Way of Southwest Minnesota is an independent, local organization working to create lasting changes in people's lives and the communities in Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Yellow Medicine and western Redwood Counties of Minnesota.*

Learn more about United Way of Southwest Minnesota at [www.unitedwayswmn.org](http://www.unitedwayswmn.org)