



Welcome to the Rotary Club of Sweet Home
P. O. Box 123
Sweet Home, OR 97386
Club No. 366 - Chartered April 8, 1941

Sweet Home Reads, Sweet Home Leads, Sweet Home SUCCEEDS!

Dear Honorable Members of the House Committee on Education,

I am writing in support of House Bill 2811, continuing the funding of the Imagination Library program. This is a remarkable program that has been enriching the lives of children in our region since its introduction by the United Way of Linn, Benton & Lincoln Counties in 2015. This invaluable initiative provides free, age appropriate, high-quality books to children from birth to age 5. This, instills in them a lifelong love for reading and learning. It also fosters quality family bonding time centered around high-quality literature.

As a retired school district superintendent, I am sorry to say that the statistics surrounding childhood literacy paint a sobering picture of the challenges our children face. Research shows that children who are not reading at grade level by 3rd grade are four times more likely to drop out of school, and a staggering 63% of 3rd graders in our region are not meeting proficient reading standards. Additionally, 80% of low-income students are not reading at grade level by 4th grade, highlighting the urgent need for interventions to support early literacy development among disadvantaged populations.

Despite these challenges, we have witnessed incredible results locally thanks to the community's support of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Since its inception, approximately 13,000 children have been enrolled in the program, and over 380,000 books have been mailed to families, sparking excitement for reading and learning in countless households. Moreover, Rotarians examined early data from the Greater Albany Public Schools and the Sweet Home School District that revealed the children who graduated from the program exhibited remarkable literacy scores compared to their peers, with significant improvements in early literacy skills. The Imagination Library is making a difference in children's early reading success. It also helps create a strong parent/child bonding experience.

As we strive to create a brighter future for our children, I implore you to continue your support of the Imagination Library program. By investing in early childhood literacy, we can empower our children to reach their full potential and build a stronger, more vibrant community for generations to come.

Thank you for your commitment to the well-being and educational success of our children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Larry Horton".

Larry Horton, EdD
Sweet Home Rotary Club