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TENNOVA-VOLUNTEER MARTIN HOSPITAL TO ENROLL NEWBORN BABIES IN TENNESSEE'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY PROGRAM

Governor's Books from Birth Foundation, Weakley County Reading Railroad, and Tennova-Volunteer Martin Hospital partner to enroll newborns in Tennessee's Imagination Library program

MARTIN, Tenn. – Governor's Books from Birth Foundation (GBBF), Weakley County Mayor Jake Bynum, and Weakley County Reading Railroad celebrate the launch of a new birthing hospital partnership with Tennova-Volunteer Martin Hospital Tuesday afternoon to begin enrolling newborn babies into Tennessee's Imagination Library program.

"Weakley County Reading Railroad is excited about Tennova's commitment to the success of our organization and the children of Weakley County. As County Mayor, there is no bigger issue than workforce development in recruiting and retaining industry to our community. It is my belief that this practice starts at the most primary level and the opportunity of this initiative will help prepare our children for the jobs of the future," said Jake Bynum, Mayor of Weakley County.

Through this partnership, each family of a newborn child will be given the opportunity to enroll in Tennessee's Imagination Library and will then begin receiving one book per month mailed to the child's home, at no cost to the family. Each child enrolled in the program prior to hospital discharge, will receive a gift of the first Imagination Library book, *The Little Engine That Could*, as a tangible example of the wonderful books that will arrive each month until the child reaches age five.

"We are excited to partner with Imagination Library to provide books to newborns at our hospital and to help them begin their lives with a solid educational background," said Darrell Blaylock, Chief Executive Officer of Tennova-Volunteer Martin.

Tennessee's Imagination Library program is made available to all Tennessee children, from birth to age five, through a unique, three-way partnership between GBBF, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, and a local affiliate program in each of Tennessee's 95 counties. To emphasize the benefits of reading with children beginning at birth, GBBF launched the birthing hospital initiative in 2014, partnering with hospitals across the state to introduce Tennessee's Imagination Library program to families of newborns.

"Through this partnership, we are able to highlight the important connection between childhood literacy and healthy child development. Literacy is the foundation for building a strong body and mind, and early exposure to books has proven to be a key factor in long-term educational success," GBBF President Theresa Carl said. "Our goal is to have partnerships with birthing hospitals like Tennova-Volunteer Martin all across the state of Tennessee, giving children the chance to experience the joy of books and the tools to succeed in school from the moment they enter this world."

Founded in November 2004, Weakley County Reading Railroad serves as the local affiliate Imagination Library program and has delivered more than 167,000 books to children in the community. Currently, 63.5% of all children under age five living in Weakley County are enrolled in the program and receive books each month. Each month Weakley County Reading Railroad delivers more than 1,100 books to children.

About GBBF

The mission of Governor's Books from Birth Foundation is to sustain and strengthen Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program in all 95 Tennessee counties, ensuring that new, age-appropriate books are mailed to Tennessee's preschool children, at no cost to the family and regardless of income. To learn how to support *your* county's Imagination Library program, or for information on how to register a child, visit www.GovernorsFoundation.org or www.facebook.com/TNImaginationLibrary, or call toll-free at (877) 99-BOOKS.

About Tennova Healthcare

One of the state's largest health networks, Tennova Healthcare includes 16 hospitals and more than 115 physician clinics. The combined network has approximately 2,600 licensed beds, 2,800 physicians on the combined active medical staffs, and 9,000 employees, with more than 70,000 admissions and 465,000 emergency department visits each year. Tennova Healthcare – Regional Jackson is owned, in part, by physicians. Learn more at www.Tennova.com.

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