

Women's Fund



Women's Fund Supports Reading Program for Kids

A stop at the mailbox almost inevitably leads a young girl to ask her mother "Is there a book for me?" She's only three, but she can hardly wait for her mom to remove the book's plastic wrap so she can flip through the pages. She's eager to read it and if it is like some of the others, she soon will be "reading" it to her baby brother.

The books she has received from the Imagination Library each month since she was born are treasures - each teaching her new words and instilling a love for reading.

It's an excitement for reading - and its ripple effect - that led the Women's Fund to select the Imagination Library at the United

Way of Central Minnesota as a beneficiary of the Women on Stage proceeds this year. A grant from the Women's Fund at the Central Minnesota Community Foundation will help strengthen the local literacy program and get age-appropriate books in the hands of more children and families in the community.

The program is open to any children under age 5 living in the local United Way's service area, but the organization focuses on bringing the program to low-income families.

Imagination Library aims to bridge the education gap by providing free books each month to local children until their fifth birthday. A parent survey shows the impact

with 93 percent reporting that they read more often to their children because of Imagination Library and 93 percent stating that their children show more interest in books.

Those moments likely will have a lasting impact. Studies show that 90 percent of brain development happens by age 5 and reading to children before age 5 increases school readiness and academic performance.

Women on Stage Benefits Local Causes

Proceeds from the Women on Stage event this year benefitted these community causes:

- **Imagination Library at United Way of Central Minnesota**

A literacy program that mails free books to children until their fifth birthday.

- **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Minnesota**

A mentoring program focused on making meaningful, monitored matches between adult volunteers and children, ages 5 to 14.

- **Great River Area Faith in Action**

A nondenominational, faith-based program that provides volunteer services to enable older adults and people with disabilities to remain living independently in their homes for as long as possible.

- **St. Cloud Legal Service**

An agency that provides legal advice or representation to low-income persons in the St. Cloud area for a variety of issues, ranging from immigration and education to employment and healthcare.

- **Central Minnesota Legal Services**

An agency that provides civil legal services to low-income persons in 21 counties in Central Minnesota.

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The St. Cloud Times/STYLE Magazine is a proud supporter of the Women's Fund and its mission.