



Year In Review 2009

All countries and cultures have their traditions to ring in the New Year. You can bet that on New Year's Day on just about every table in every home in the southeastern United States you will find a bowl of black eyed peas and collard greens. It is the meal for good fortune in the coming year. If there was ever a year to double up on the black eyed peas and the collard greens, it was 2009. The Dollywood Foundation, like the rest of the world, viewed 2009 as a year for concern and uncertainty. No doubt, the year proved to be difficult but at the end of the day, the generous helpings black eyed peas and collard greens worked their magic.

The number of communities participating in Dolly's Imagination Library continued to increase at a brisk rate – landing at 1068 by the end of the year. The number of children enrolled each month soared to just under 561,000 children. Right at 6.2 million books were distributed in 2009 bringing the overall total to just over 23 million books.

During the year a number of milestones were achieved. In the United Kingdom, the 100,000th book was distributed and in Canada the number of children participating each month increased by over 100%. Partnerships with Rotary International and United Way were announced in March and June respectively. These partnerships powered the growth of participating communities in 2009 and they will continue to anchor the expansion of the program for years to come.

A major priority is to replicate the statewide, universal programs in Tennessee and the Yukon Territories.. Major strides were made toward this goal in Alaska, Georgia and West Virginia. The race is on to see whom will join this very special group.

There were a number of major media pieces about the Imagination Library. In Canada, the documentary *The Book Lady* aired nationally and will join the rotation for in flight movie options for Air Canada in the spring of 2010. In the USA, Dolly released her children's book *I Am a Rainbow* and announced that all of her royalties will be donated to The Dollywood Foundation. In November, a national television feature on Dolly was broadcast throughout the United Kingdom which stressed the connection between her spiritual beliefs and her commitment to inspire children.

After months of review and consultation with community sponsors and parents, a decision was made to introduce soft cover books for the older age groups in the Imagination Library. While offering the same quality of books, the move will decrease the overall cost to communities by at least 15% and maybe as much as 20-22%.

A year that began with trepidation ended with gratitude. Thankful that so many people never wavered in their commitment to children; thankful for the collective wisdom to take some chances in order to insure the continuation of this effort.... And thankful for the blessings of black eyed peas and collard greens.