



WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS

# NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2024



**JENNIFER BERTINO-TARRANT**  
WILL COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Dear Residents,

This month I was proud to partner with the Will County Center for Economic Development and The Dollywood Foundation to announce that we are working to bring **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library** to Will County.

This will be a transformational initiative that will promote childhood literacy throughout the county. This partnership will kick off a fundraising campaign to launch this program here in Will County, which mails free, high-quality and age-appropriate books to children from birth to age five.

The power of books is undeniable. The earlier we get them into our children's hands the more opportunities we provide for our earliest learners. We have a unique opportunity, with the help of the State of Illinois, to develop emergent readers and create a foundation for the love of reading.

For nearly 30 years, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has become the preeminent early childhood book-gifting program in the world and has gifted over 250 million free books in five countries. Thanks to matching support from the State of Illinois, every \$16 raised locally will sponsor one child to receive a full year of high-quality, age-appropriate books. We appreciate the initial donations that have been made to help us reach our fundraising goal to launch this program, including the Lockport Woman's Club making a \$5,000 donation to kick-off this fundraising campaign.

To learn more about Imagination Library of Will County, visit [WillCountyImaginationLibrary.org](http://WillCountyImaginationLibrary.org). You'll also find information about the Foundation's first event.

In closing, I would like to wish you and your family a happy and joyous holiday season.

Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant | Will County Executive



## IMAGINATION CELEBRATION

A Dolly Parton BIRTHDAY BOOK BASH

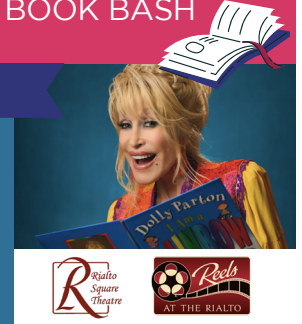
Help bring Imagination Library to Will County!

**9<sup>t</sup>o5**  
*starring Dolly Parton*

**JANUARY 30**

**RIALTO SQUARE THEATRE**

**TICKETS: \$20**



### Kick-Off Event for Imagination Library of Will County Set for January 30

Help bring Imagination Library to Will County!

A kick-off fundraising event will be held at the Rialto Square Theatre on January 30, 2025 in celebration of Imagination Library and Dolly Parton's January birthday. The **"Imagination Celebration - A Dolly Parton Birthday Book Bash"** will feature a celebratory reception and a showing of the 1980 classic 9 to 5, starring Dolly Parton.

All proceeds from the event will support the Imagination Library of Will County. The reception will begin at 5:30 p.m. on January 30 at the Rialto Square Theatre in Joliet, with the movie starting at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$20 and available for purchase starting on Dec. 26 at the Rialto Box Office (102 N. Chicago Street, Joliet, IL - Mon.-Fri. - 12 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.). The Rialto Box Office will be closed between Dec. 30 and Jan. 2 due to the holidays.

Tickets can also be purchased by check or cash (exact change) at various locations, including the Joliet Region Chamber of Commerce, the Plainfield Shorewood Chamber of Commerce, and the Lockport Chamber of Commerce.

A full listing of ticket locations and more information about the Imagination Library of Will County can be found at the link below. For more information about the Imagination Celebration event, email [maureen@thedunloegroup.com](mailto:maureen@thedunloegroup.com). To donate directly to the Imagination Library of Will County, including sponsoring a child to receive one year of free books for \$16, visit the link below.

[Learn More: willcountyimaginationlibrary.org](http://willcountyimaginationlibrary.org).



## STRING LIGHT RECYCLING

### Kick-Off Event for Imagination Library of Will County Set for January 30

Have a string of holiday lights that doesn't light up anymore? Will County will be collecting string lights for recycling at four locations this holiday season.

Collection boxes are set up in the entries of the following locations:

- County Office Building (302 N. Chicago St, Joliet)
- Sunny Hill Nursing Home of Will County (421 Doris Ave, Joliet)
- Three Rivers Public Library District (25207 W. Channahon Dr, Channahon)
- Land Use Building (58 E. Clinton St, Joliet)

Lights can be dropped off during regular business hours at the three county buildings, 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. (Mon-Fri). Open hours at the library are 9:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. (Mon-Thu), 9:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. (Fri), 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. (Sat), and 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. (Sun).

Collection boxes will remain at these locations until January 31, 2025. These are for string lights only. Stand-alone LED, CFL, or other lights will not be accepted.

## Dial-a-Ride Expansion Leads to Increase in Ridership

Will County's Access Will County Dial-a-Ride service, which provides transportation services to seniors and residents living with disabilities, continues to see increased usage since the program was expanded in August of this year. The expansion, which opened transportation access to residents in southwest Will County, has led to dial-a-ride service returning to pre-pandemic levels.

By the end of 2024, nearly 11,000 rides will be delivered to residents. This is the greatest number of rides since the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a nation-wide decrease in public transit ridership, and the second highest year of ridership in the program's history.

The expansion of services included service to several Will County townships that previously did not have access to dial-a-ride transportation service. Residents over 60 years of age or living with a disability in the expanded service area, which includes the City of Braidwood and the City of Wilmington, have been able to schedule curb-to-curb transportation service with flexible routes and scheduling for any purpose. The expansion also empowered users in both eastern and southwestern Will County to travel anywhere in the county and locations within one mile of the county border.



The Will County Executive Office, which oversees the program, has also expanded community outreach to increase awareness of this popular service. The office held 11 workshops and events throughout the county, educating residents about their transportation options and assisting them with registration. Nearly 400 riders registered for the dial-a-ride service in 2024, which now covers residents age 60 and older and those living with disabilities in 13 townships.

**Learn More:** [willcounty.gov/County-Offices/Special-Services/Access-Will-County-Dial-a-Ride](http://willcounty.gov/County-Offices/Special-Services/Access-Will-County-Dial-a-Ride)



## Will County EMA Hosts Public Safety Symposium

The Will County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) conducted its second Public Safety Symposium in Frankfort on December 10. Over 100 members of the local public safety community attended to learn best practices, share ideas, and hear perspectives on a variety of emergency situations over the last year. Attendance at the event included fire departments, public works agencies, police departments, park districts, educational agencies, and other public safety entities.

The program featured subject-matter professionals, who covered timely topics about crisis communication strategies and best practices, resources available from Will County EMA, and strategies for cross-agency communications during large-scale emergencies.

Thank you to the EMA team for organizing these collaborative programs to bring together public safety leadership throughout the county!

## Thoughts on How to Improve Traffic Safety in Will County

Want to improve traffic survey in Will County? The deadline to share your thoughts as part of the Will County Safety Action Plan is January 3rd.

Will County launched the Safety Action Plan earlier this year to identify practical actions, innovative solutions, and policy proposals to protect everyone on the roads, including pedestrians, cyclists, and those using mobility devices. The goal is to develop a comprehensive plan aimed at making roads safer, reducing crash severity, and ultimately saving lives throughout the county. The plan is being developed in partnership with a variety of local leaders and stakeholders.

You can help improve traffic safety in Will County by contributing to our safety action plan! To make your voice heard, please visit the project webpage to drop a pin on the Safety Hotspots Map and take the survey.

**Learn More:** [engage.cmap.illinois.gov/will?tool=survey\\_tool](http://engage.cmap.illinois.gov/will?tool=survey_tool)

