100 Women Who Care vote to back group giving books to kids

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SANDUSKY — The first project for Sandusky's newest charity is to help supply books to young children in Erie County.

The Erie County chapter of "100 Women Who Care" held its first meeting last week at the Sandusky Yacht Club and raised about $10,000 to support Sandusky Imagination Library, a project of the Kiwanis Club of Sandusky that seeks to supply 12 books a year to every Erie County child from birth to age five.

Currently the program provides books to about 940 kids a month in Sandusky and Perkins Township, but it will expand soon to another 300 kids in Castalia and Huron, said Anne McGookey, a Kiwanis member who leads the club's effort. The program is affiliated with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, which subsidizes some of the cost of the books. The idea is to supply every kid with books, regardless of the family's income.  “Dolly Parton’s criteria if you are going to be an affiliate is every child gets a book. It is not predicated on income whatsoever," McGookey said.

The Sandusky Library supports the effort by keeping a database of children, who are each mailed a book every month until they age out of the program. Ann Murray started the program in 2012 and called on the Kiwanis Club for help as the program grew. It's a good fit, as the local service club used to support Reading Is Fundamental and also supplied books to local preschools, giving each child a book to take home. Sandusky Imagination Library has been adopted as the Kiwanians' signature program, McGookey said.

The Erie County chapter of 100 Women Who Care seeks to recruit more than 100 women who pledge to donate $100 four times a year to a charity chosen by the group.

At each meeting, members are invited to put the name of a group they support on a piece of paper tossed into a hopper. Three of the nominations are drawn out, and each woman gets 10 minutes to make a case, five minutes of talk and five minutes of questions. The group then votes on which of the three to support.

Martha Miller, a Perkins Township resident, launched the effort to form a local group after reading a piece about the organization in the Cleveland Plain Dealer by columnist Regina Brett. Miller was joined in the organizing effort by Mary Anne Baxter, Linda Ziegler and Pat Babiuch.

At the initial meeting last week, 11 groups were nominated. The three organizations that were considered were Back to the Wild, Make a Wish and Sandusky Imagination Library. McGookey spoke for Sandusky Imagination Library and won the vote, Baxter said.

As of Thursday, the group had raised $10,100.

All of the organizations supported by the local group must be a charity recognized by the IRS and must pledge to spend all of the money raised here in Erie County.

The group's next meeting is scheduled for Jan. 12, 2017, at the Sandusky Yacht Club, with social time at 5:30 p.m. and a meeting at 6:15 p.m. See the group's website at www.100womenwhocareineriecounty.com.