

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From Book Fair to Literacy Movement: Children's Book Fair Has Reached 1,000 Children, Uniting Authors, Families, and Wellness Professionals

Nationwide (March 10, 2026) – What began as a local children's book fair is evolving into a broader literacy movement responding to persistent gaps in representation in children's literature. The [When I See Me™ Children's Book Fair](#) has raised more than \$10,000 and placed books into the hands of over 1,000 children through its signature ["A Book in Every Bag"](#) effort – designed to ensure every child receives a book reflecting their identity and potential. The book fair began after a young reader's experience highlighted how rarely children encounter books that reflect their lives. Today, the initiative operates as a social-impact publishing model blending author visibility, family literacy, and book access.

The third annual event takes place **Saturday, July 25, 2026 (11:00 AM–4:00 PM)** at the **Dayton Metro Library's West Branch**, bringing together children's authors, educators, families, and mental health professionals for a literacy experience that extends beyond traditional book fairs. The model responds to an ongoing representation gap in children's publishing by creating spaces where diverse authors are visible, accessible, and directly connected to young readers.

Attendance at last year's event doubled from the previous year, signaling growing community demand for culturally responsive books and family-centered literacy programming.

"When children see themselves in stories, it shapes how they see their future," said **Valerie J. Lewis Coleman**, founder of When I See Me™. "This work brings books, belonging, and possibility together in one place." The approach positions the book fair as part of a broader community-driven literacy movement rather than a standalone event.

Unlike traditional fairs, When I See Me™ integrates youth author debuts, social-emotional learning experiences, and family literacy engagement – positioning reading as both academic and emotional development.

The initiative continues to expand through partnerships with schools, community organizations, and independent authors, with organizers exploring ways to replicate the



model in additional communities, laying the groundwork for expansion into additional communities nationwide.

Media coverage opportunities include youth author debuts, live social-emotional learning activities, family literacy engagement, and the growing network of independent children's authors contributing to representation in publishing.



Event: When I See Me™ Children's Book Fair

Date/Time: Saturday, July 25, 2026 | 11:00 AM–4:00 PM

Location: Dayton Metro Library – West Branch, 300 Abbey Avenue, Dayton, OH 45417

More Information

For Authors: WhenSeeMe.com/Author

For Sponsors: WhenSeeMe.com/Sponsorship

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About When I See Me™

When I See Me™ is a community-driven literacy initiative founded by author and publishing mentor, Valerie J. Lewis Coleman, to ensure children have access to books that reflect their identities, experiences, and possibilities. Through children's book fairs, youth publishing opportunities, and family-centered literacy programming, the initiative connects diverse authors, educators, mental health professionals, and community partners to support reading, confidence, and belonging.

When I See Me™ uses publishing as a tool to support literacy, identity development, and youth voice.

Since its launch, When I See Me™ has raised more than \$10,000 and placed books into the hands of over 1,000 children, with attendance growing each year. Book access is made possible through individual donors, sponsors, and community partnerships that help provide free books to participating children.

Coleman is developing the initiative's long-term infrastructure to expand access to diverse books and youth storytelling opportunities in additional communities nationwide.

Learn more at WhenISeeMe.com.



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