

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

When Children See Themselves in Books, Everything Changes — Dayton Book Fair Seeks Donations to Gift 400 Books

Third Annual Literacy Event Features Diverse Authors, Read-Alouds, Social-Emotional Learning Activities, and the Signature A Book in Every Bag™ Initiative

National — May 20, 2026 — The Third Annual When I See Me™ Children’s Book Fair returns on Saturday, July 25, 2026, from 11 AM to 4 PM at Dayton Metro Library’s West Branch located at 300 Abbey Avenue, Dayton, Ohio.

Created by award-winning author, publisher, and literacy advocate Valerie J. Lewis Coleman, the When I See Me™ Children’s Book Fair is a joyful, community-powered literacy experience designed to help children see themselves reflected in the stories they read. The event features diverse authors, culturally affirming children’s books, read-alouds, interactive literacy experiences, social-emotional learning activities with a licensed mental health therapist, and the signature **A Book in Every Bag™** initiative.

Through A Book in Every Bag™, every child who attends the fair receives a free book of their choice. The 2026 campaign seeks to raise **\$4,000 to provide 400 children with free books**. Community members, churches, businesses, civic groups, and organizations are invited to donate at bit.ly/wheniseeme2026.

“When children see themselves in books, something powerful happens,” said Coleman, founder of the When I See Me™ Children’s Book Fair. “They believe their stories matter, their voices matter, and their dreams are possible. A Book in Every Bag™ is our promise that cost will not keep a child from leaving the fair with a story of their own.”

Since its launch, When I See Me™ has placed books into the hands of **1,000+ children**, creating access to stories that celebrate identity, imagination, confidence, and cultural pride. The fair has grown into more than a book event; it is a literacy movement rooted in representation, access, and community engagement.

Unlike traditional book fairs, When I See Me™ centers both literacy and emotional wellness. Children and families have the opportunity to meet authors, hear stories read aloud, participate in creative activities, and engage in social-emotional learning experiences that help children process feelings, build confidence, and connect with books in meaningful ways.

The fair also creates a platform for diverse children’s authors to connect directly with families, educators, and community members. Limited spaces remain for authors interested in participating in the 2026 fair. [Click here to learn more.](#)

“Every child leaves with a book. Every child leaves feeling seen,” Coleman said. “That is the heart of this work.”

Donations to support A Book in Every Bag™ may be made at bit.ly/wheniseeme2026. Every \$10 gift helps place a culturally affirming book into the hands of a child.

For more information about the When I See Me™ Children's Book Fair, author participation, sponsorship, or community partnerships, visit WhenSeeMe.com.

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 Donors: WhenSeeMe.com/Donate

For Sponsors: WhenSeeMe.com/Sponsorship

For Authors: WhenSeeMe.com/Author

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About When I See Me™ Children's Book Fair

The When I See Me™ Children's Book Fair is a literacy-centered, community-powered experience founded by Valerie J. Lewis Coleman to help children see themselves as readers, leaders, and heroes. Through diverse authors, culturally affirming books, interactive literacy experiences, and the signature A Book in Every Bag™ initiative, When I See Me™ promotes representation, reading engagement, confidence, and a lifelong love of books.

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.

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.

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