

The latest information and news from the Rochester Area Foundation, First Homes, and First Steps

CATALYST



Rochester Area Foundation
Dedicated to Community
Vitality Since 1949

WWW.ROCHESTERAREA.ORG

GRANTS SUSTAIN PROGRAMS THAT STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITY

Over the past 65 years, donor gifts have made it possible for the Rochester Area Foundation to award nearly \$30 million in grants. Although each competitive grantmaking cycle takes several months to complete, the real work begins after the grant is awarded. This summer, we followed up with some of our recent grant recipients to find out how their projects are progressing and to get an idea of the impact donor-sponsored grantmaking has on our community.

Rochester Senior Center

“The matching grant from the Rochester Area Foundation Donor Advised Funds has made it possible for us to purchase a ‘new to us’ gently-used van for our Senior Dining Program,” says Rochester Senior

Center Executive Director Sally Gallagher. In December 2008, the Senior Center received a \$13,000 grant made up of contributions from several of the Foundation’s donor advisors. “Because of this we have been able to provide 17,149 hot, nutri-

tious noon meals to 350 income-eligible seniors the first half of this year.”

To assist the Senior Center in securing the remaining funds needed to purchase the van, the award was structured as a matching grant. *Continued on next page*

Grant support from numerous donors helped Rochester Senior Center buy a new delivery van.



HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE

THE FOUNDATION



Grant Helps Medical Equipment Loan Program

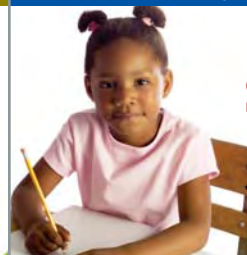
PAGE 2

FIRST HOMES

Home Is Where The Yard Is

PAGE 3

FIRST STEPS



First Steps School Readiness Study Update

PAGE 5

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

“We have been able to secure matching funds from other individuals, groups and companies to pay for the entire cost of the vehicle. We are now working on a maintenance fund for the on-going upkeep of the van. Thank goodness we can use our other funds to help with the on-going operational costs of this program and not have to use them to pay for the purchase of the van,” explains Gallagher.

“Other funders see a matching grant program as a good way to double their contribution. It seems that these other funders see the Foundation as a seal of approval. If it is good enough for the Foundation to contribute to, then it must be a worthy cause.

We are deeply appreciative of the Foundation and those who have started the Donor Advised Funds that contributed generously to our project,” says Gallagher.

The Reading Center

This spring, The Reading Center was awarded a \$10,000 grant for their Best of Basics Summer Program, which aims to bridge the gap between grade levels and provide a boost to struggling students with math, reading and study skills courses. This summer, the program saw an 82% increase in registrations and a 142% increase in unduplicated registrations over the summer of 2008.

“Without a doubt, the underwriting grant from the Rochester Area Foundation was the major cause behind the huge increase in enrollment at our 2009 Best of Basics program,” says Best of Basics Coordinator Sue Christenson.

Because the Foundation’s grant allowed The Reading Center to lower



More children are participating in The Reading Center’s Best of Basics Summer Program thanks to a grant that reduced the enrollment fee.

the cost of each course by 39%, “More parents were able to afford the course despite the depressed economic climate,” says Christenson.

“Even better, the majority of the kids

Did you know?

Donors to the Rochester Area Foundation will give **33** local freshmen a helping hand as they began their college education this fall. Through scholarship funds at the Foundation set up by **12** different donors, the students will receive a combined total of more than **\$27,000** in scholarships for their first year of higher education.

enrolled are new to The Reading Center—these are kids that have not had the proven, effective interventions for which The Reading Center is known. After a few days at Best of Basics, we see the light of understanding click on in their eyes. For the teacher, that moment is

what makes it worth everything!”

Goodwill/Easter Seals of Minnesota

Goodwill/Easter Seals of Minnesota received \$5,000 for its Medical Equipment Loan Program in May 2009. This service is available to anyone in need of assistive living medical equipment—such as commodes, wheelchairs and walkers—which is often very costly to purchase. Individuals who use this service may have temporary or permanent needs, or those resulting from the sudden worsening of a chronic condition.

“The Rochester Area Medical Equipment Loan program re-opened on February 17, 2009, with Tony Adler at the helm,” says Annette Hanley, development officer of special projects for Goodwill/Easter Seals. “The program has saved the community over \$34,000 had the items been purchased new, instead of loaned. To date, 320 people have accessed the program with 490 pieces of durable medical equipment being loaned.”



Rochester Area Foundation

PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE AND INFORMED GIVING

Phone: (507) 282-0203 | Email: raf-info@rochesterarea.org | Web: www.rochesterarea.org

TRANSFORMING FORECLOSURES, PRESERVING NEIGHBORHOODS

First Homes is in the midst of a unique challenge: purchase, rehabilitate and sell 35 foreclosed homes in Rochester in 18 months. Sounds like a daunting task, but thankfully First Homes is not in it alone.

Announced in March of this year, a total of \$3.3 million in grants from the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, Minnesota Housing, Greater Minnesota Housing Fund, the City of Rochester and the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines have been pooled together to fund foreclosure remediation in Rochester. While First Homes is not the direct recipient of all of the funding, it is working with the City of Rochester and Home Federal Bank to buy, rehabilitate and sell foreclosed homes in the downtown neighborhoods of Kutzky Park, Northrup, East Side Pioneers and Slatterly Park.

Continued on page 5



First Homes will restore this foreclosed, four-square home in Kutzky Park from a converted rental to its original single-family intent.



The 1935 story-and-a-half, wood framed, scalloped stucco home now lives a mere five blocks away from its original location.

HOME IS WHERE THE YARD IS

In June, First Homes took match-making to a whole new level when it saved an historic 1935 stucco home destined for demolition in Rochester’s Kutzky Park neighborhood and moved it to a vacant lot just five blocks away. Neighbors turning out for the event were thrilled. And the two donors involved, one contributing the house and one the land, were equally as pleased.

“The neighborhood was very appreciative of this project and completely supportive,” said Adam Ferrari, an architect and project manager for First Homes. “In many ways, this house move benefited both donors as well.”

The couple who donated the house, which had occupied the lot next to theirs, is using the extra space to expand their home and plant a garden. The formerly weedy, vacant lot down the street now displays a beautiful home, which adds density, street frontage, new neighbors, and an increased property value to the neighborhood.

With the generosity of two creative donors, these two unconventional gifts came together to preserve the heritage and architecture of the Kutzky Park neighborhood, which is characterized by early 1900s homes, orthogonal street arrangements, alleyways on some blocks, and large boulevard trees.

Now that First Homes has moved the house, it will become part of the Heritage Homes program, which purchases homes for rehabilitation and then sells them to qualifying families. This home will also be part of First Homes’ Community Land Trust (CLT), which preserves the home’s affordability for the life of the home.

“Plus, an estimated 40 tons of building materials from demolishing a home will not be taking up space in a local landfill,” said Ferrari. “I would hope that people understand the environmental as well as historical preservation benefit to moving houses or adaptively reusing them. The goal of this project was to preserve the character, but the amount of environmental or ‘green’ benefits are not so obvious.

“The greenest building,” added Ferrari, “is the one that already exists.”



BUILDING BETTER NEIGHBORHOODS — ONE HOME AT A TIME

Phone: (507) 287-7117 | Email: info-fh@firsthomes.org | Web: www.firsthomes.org

CONTINUED FROM PAGE THREE

**TRANSFORMING FORECLOSURES,
PRESERVING NEIGHBORHOODS**

Another local agency, Three Rivers Community Action, is also partnering with First Homes to rehabilitate foreclosures in Rochester.

Four months into the project, First Homes is now beginning to delve into the oftentimes extensive rehabilitation required to make foreclosed properties attractive and livable. At the time this article was written, First Homes had purchased six homes within the target area and was negotiating the purchase of several more. All of the houses have seen some level of disrepair and neglect. Two of the properties are single-family homes that have been converted into rentals, a process that frequently destroys much of the home's character and charm. First Homes will restore both homes to their original single-family intent.

Once the rehab work is complete, each home will become part of First Homes' Community Land Trust, making them ideal for working families and first-time homebuyers while ensuring the home's affordability for future buyers. Because the project targets Rochester's core neighborhoods, all the homes will have the added benefit of being walkable to downtown.

This collaborative project allows First Homes and its partners a unique opportunity to turn neighborhood eyesores into assets, and open the doors to homeownership for a new generation of buyers.

A JUMPSTART ON LIFE'S LESSONS

The Rochester Area Foundation recently awarded a \$24,000 grant to Child Care Resource & Referral for its School Readiness Scholarships, which means that 10 local children will be able to attend preschool this year. The grant will provide scholarships to eligible families and will cover a year of tuition.

"Thanks to the generosity of others, both of my children will benefit from early childhood education and get a jumpstart on life's lessons," said Amy Olson-Treptow, whose 4-year-old son, Spencer, received a scholarship for the 2009-2010 school year. He'll be following in big brother Carter's footsteps when he attends Y-Tots through the Rochester Family Y in the fall.

Carter, now 5-and-a-half, received a similar scholarship for the 2008-2009 school year when he attended Y-Tots. The scholarship covered the majority of the tuition for each month as well as a portion of the registration fee for an education that the boys' parents deem invaluable.

"Carter learned things throughout the school year that he simply would not have learned otherwise," said Amy. "He learned to play nicely with

others and socialize well. He knows how to write his name, has made new friends, and looks forward to starting school. I don't think he'd be as comfortable about going to kindergarten without his preschool experience."

Carter's younger brother, Spencer, has had difficulty with his hearing since birth and recently underwent surgery to correct it. With the scholarship, he will be able to attend a preschool that Amy feels will be able to give him the individual attention he needs to thrive.

"Spencer is a great kid!" said Amy. "He's going to learn how to cope with his emotions and get along with others as well as learning his ABCs and 123s. The sooner those lessons are learned, the easier life will be for him."

Without the help of Child Care Resource & Referral's School Readiness Scholarships, Spencer, like Carter, would not be able to attend preschool. "We were just informed that Spencer would be receiving a scholarship for next year," said Amy. "We are thrilled!"

Spencer, however, took the news as a sign that it was time to finally grow up. When told he was going to attend Y-Tots in the fall, he told his mom, "I guess I need to go in the potty all the time then, huh?"



KINDERGARTEN READINESS FOR OUR COMMUNITY'S FUTURE

Phone: (507) 282-1027 | Email: info-fs@firststeps.us | Web: www.firststeps.us

FIRST STEPS BUSINESS ALLIANCE IS GOING STRONG

As Rochester Area Foundation's First Steps Business Alliance approaches its second anniversary, it is gaining momentum in the Rochester business community. Businesses that join the Alliance have made a commitment to one of Rochester's most critical economic resources: our children. Through Alliance programs, Rochester businesses, their employees, and the greater community gain many benefits.

First Steps Business Alliance spring and summer highlights of work in our community include:

- Increase in First Steps Business Alliance Members: 33 current members representing a diverse array of local businesses
- Consistently well-attended workplace trainings, reaching more than 130 local employees in the past six months.

Recent sessions for working families include:

- SEEDS for School Success – Teaching reading, writing, and talking skills for young children

- **PEP:** Parent Education Program – Topics that support working families and school readiness skills including Teaching Responsibility, Chores Without Wars, Meal Time Battles, and Positive Communication for Effective Parenting
- **Parenting Counts** – Testing Limits, Handling Everyday Stress and Rough Days, Promoting Emotional Development, and Tantrums Happen

The First Steps Business Alliance also formed a partnership with Rochester Community Technical College's Business and Workforce Education Division to offer general topics requested by Alliance members such as Communication Skills in the Workplace, Keeping Positive in Today's Economy, and Stress Tips and Tools.

Some Alliance members tailor trainings to the needs of their own employees. Others have sponsored sessions that are open to the entire community, such as two recent SEEDS for School Success classes, one sponsored by Canadian Honker Restaurant &

Continued on page 6

FIRST STEPS SCHOOL READINESS STUDY UPDATE

This summer marks one year since several Rochester organizations began a study unlike any other in the state of Minnesota. The First Steps School Readiness Study—a collaborative effort of First Steps, Rochester Public Schools/Parents Are Important In Rochester (PAIR), Child Care Resource and Referral, Head Start, Wilder Research, and local licensed child care providers—has seen a high rate of participation and positive feedback in its first year. Upon completion of the study, Rochester will be the only community in the state to develop a standardized process for measuring school readiness.

Over the course of the five-year study, 800-900 children will be followed from age 3 to age 5 to measure their progress toward school readiness. There are over 240 children currently enrolled in the study's first cohort. The second cohort of 3-year-olds will begin the study this fall and the third cohort in the fall of 2010.

The study also relies on licensed child care providers who agree to attend training, assess enrolled children and report

back their findings. To date, over 160 local providers have completed the training and are knowledgeable in assessing child development and communicating school readiness information to parents/guardians. The number of child care providers assessing child development will increase as the study progresses. In addition to promoting improvement of early care and education by targeting areas of need, this study will also prepare participating providers in the assessment requirements of Parent Aware—the state's anticipated new quality rating system.

The First Steps School Readiness Study was originally funded by the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF); however, the economic climate

caused MELF to reduce its commitment this spring. The Rochester Area Foundation has committed to continuing the study and is seeking funding to support this important system change and improvement effort.

To enroll your 3-year-old in the First Steps School Readiness Study, please contact PAIR at (507) 328-4004.

What is school readiness?

The skills, knowledge, behaviors, and accomplishments that children know and can do as they enter kindergarten in the following areas of child development:

- Social & emotional
- Physical well being & motor
- Approaches to learning
- Creativity & arts
- Cognitive & general knowledge
- Language

—Minnesota Department of Education

FIRST STEPS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE FIVE

FIRST STEPS BUSINESS ALLIANCE IS GOING STRONG

Catering and the other by Sunstone Hotel Properties.

Upcoming community training opportunities include:

- **Working Parent Stress**
September 17, 2009 from 12-1 pm
University of Minnesota Rochester
- **You've Got Personality Kid! – Working with Your Child's Temperament**
October 15, 2009 from 12-1 pm
University of Minnesota Rochester
- **SEEDS for School Success**
(Spanish-language sponsored by Sunstone Hotel Properties)
October, 2009

To learn more about these and other upcoming seminars, please email info-fs@firststeps.us to join our mailing list.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BOARD UPDATES

The Rochester Area Foundation Board of Trustees welcomes



ABDUL BENGALI
Mayo Clinic



BARBARA PORTER
Mayo Clinic



MONICA NYE-JOHNSON
Mayo Foundation



LORING STEAD
Olmsted Medical Center



SONYA MILLER
IBM Rochester



CRAIG WENDLAND
Wendland, Utz

The First Steps Board of Directors welcomes

2010 COMMUNITY CALENDAR

- Rochester Area Foundation is taking submissions for its 2010 Community Calendar, which features public event listings from Rochester nonprofits. Visit www.rochester-area.org for more info or call the Foundation at (507) 282-0203. Complimentary copies of the calendar will be available in late November.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CHECK-IN/SCREENING

- Schedule your 3-year-old's check-in/screening today by calling (507) 328-4004. The free check-in/screening is a prerequisite for kindergarten enrollment in the state of Minnesota.



Rochester Area Foundation

2200 Second St. SW, Suite 300
Rochester MN 55902-4125

Your Summer 2009 Report

GO GREEN!

Sign up to receive this newsletter electronically at www.rochesterarea.org/news/index.html
If you have updates to our mailing list or would like to be removed, please email raf-info@rochesterarea.org or call (507) 282-0203.

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 601
Rochester MN