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## **NEWS RELEASE**

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

### **Michon Rogers joins Rochester Area Foundation staff**

**Rochester, Minn.—Sept. 29, 2008**—The Rochester Area Foundation announced today that Michon Rogers has been selected as the new program director of First Steps, the Foundation's kindergarten readiness initiative. She begins on October 6.

Rogers is currently the enrichment program manager in community education with Rochester Public Schools, overseeing adult, youth and preschool enrichment, as well as programs for adults with disabilities and middle school sports. She is also an adjunct instructor in the Supervisory Management program at Rochester Community and Technical College. Rogers has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Winona State University and is pursuing her master's degree in Human Resource Development from the University of Minnesota. A native of Lanesboro, she has been an active volunteer in the Rochester community for several years, receiving the Chamber of Commerce "Volunteer of the Year" award in 2006 and, most recently, co-chairing Rochester's first annual Education Summit.



“Michon's experience as a program manager, instructor and facilitator matches up very well with our needs,” says Rochester Area Foundation Executive Director Steve Thornton. “We look forward to her contributions across the entire organization.”

Since December 2006, First Steps has been headed up by Interim Director Sheila

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Kiscaden. Kiscaden will leave the Foundation to pursue other opportunities, but will work alongside Rogers over the next several weeks to ensure a smooth transition.

Under Kiscaden's leadership, First Steps has made significant progress toward its goal of ensuring all our area's children are ready for kindergarten: Over half of Olmsted County child care providers and over 200 parents have completed the SEEDS of Early Learning training, First Steps recently secured funding from the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation to assess children's progress over a three-year period, and the First Steps Business Alliance, launched in October of 2007, is helping 30 local businesses support parents as children's first teachers through workplace seminars.

"Sheila's help in refining First Steps' goals and her efforts to build strong partnerships with early childhood organizations have paved the way for new leadership," says Jean Locke, chair of the First Steps Board and secretary of the Rochester Area Foundation Board of Trustees. "We are very grateful for her leadership and excited to begin working with Michon."

#### **About Rochester Area Foundation**

Dedicated to community vitality since 1944, Rochester Area Foundation's mission is to strengthen community philanthropy by promoting responsible and informed giving and to assist donors in meeting their charitable objectives. The Foundation uses its resources to improve the quality of life, promote greater equality of opportunities and to develop effective methods to assist those in need in the greater Rochester area. In 2007, the Foundation invested over \$3.8 million in the community through grants to local nonprofit organizations. Learn more at [www.rochesterarea.org](http://www.rochesterarea.org).

#### **About First Steps**

First Steps, an initiative of the Rochester Area Foundation, is a community-wide effort to improve the kindergarten readiness of Rochester-area children. First Steps brings together the expertise and resources of community organizations that work with families and children to: raise public awareness about the importance of school readiness, improve quality in all care settings, and evaluate children's readiness for school in all care settings. For more information, visit the First Steps Web site at [www.firststeps.us](http://www.firststeps.us).

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