

Rochester Area Foundation - News & Publications

Quote of the Moment...

In any moment of decision
the best thing you can do
is the right thing, the next
best thing is the wrong
thing, and the worst thing
you can do is nothing.

~Theodore Roosevelt ~

 E-MAIL TO A FRIEND

Rochester understands how to focus on key issues

By Mike Dougherty

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Rochester has a long history of individuals and organizations rallying around issues to enhance the community and the people who live here.

As families get back into their fall school schedules, First Steps is initiating an important kickoff in Rochester to focus attention on the importance of helping young children develop the skills that will greatly help them start school ready to learn.

First Steps is another of the important and progressive efforts spearheaded by the Rochester Area Foundation. It's an illustration of the forward-thinking efforts that have marked this community and many civic-minded organizations and individuals throughout its history.

Seventy-five years ago, a group called the Women's Civic League of Rochester, Minnesota, opened a "day nursery" in downtown Rochester to help families whose mothers worked in the city's hospitals and hotels. It marked the opening of the Civic League Day Nursery, which is Rochester's oldest childcare operation and one of the oldest in Minnesota.

That investment was started during the Great Depression in a single room of a two-story house for 12 children. Seventy-five years later, it has compounded into three childcare centers that serve 230 children annually. It's been money well spent.

In Civic League's most recent assessments of its children, 90 percent were achieving the developmentally appropriate levels for their age groups, meaning they will enter kindergarten ready to learn. The remaining children were connected with additional services to aid and boost them to reach those levels, whenever possible. No child is left behind.

Civic League Day Nursery is supportive of the First Steps initiative, because it reflects much of what occurs in our classrooms all day, every day. First Steps will further enhance this community by helping all of its children get a strong start to their educational careers by working with daycare providers, parents and community organizations. Civic League's staff will be strengthened by the training First Steps is planning.

Focusing on methods that enrich a child's early learning to form the emotional and intellectual foundations needed to succeed in school and beyond is a long-term investment with a strong payout. If there isn't the correct stimulation and caring attention, chances are good that children will fall behind and scramble to catch up. Many won't.

First Steps is about giving all of this community's children the correct trajectory from which to launch their educational careers. Success at the outset -- an upward trajectory -- gives more children the best chance to reach their full potential with the skills to eventually find the careers that match their interests and talents.

For 75 years, parents, individuals and organizations have invested their time, talents, energy and resources to ensure that Civic League Day Nursery has remained a viable option for all children. Today, it's stronger than ever with three centers in town that are focused on complementing and enhancing the lessons learned at home, so when the first school bell of fall rings, those children enter the classroom ready to learn and meet the rigorous expectations of our school systems.

First Steps is in step with the ideals and expectations that have marked many great ideas

through Rochester's history. Civic League Day Nursery supports this effort and encourages everyone to learn more and help in this effort.

Mike Dougherty is a parent and president of the Civic League Day Nursery Board of Directors.

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