

**Rochester Area Foundation - News & Publications****Quote of the Moment...**

Human kindness has never weakened the stamina or softened the fiber of a free people. A nation does not have to be cruel in order to be tough

~Franklin D. Roosevelt ~

**First Steps gets \$125,000 pledge**

By [Joshua Lynsen](#)

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Home Federal Savings Bank is pledging \$125,000 to First Steps, a kindergarten-readiness initiative.

The five-year pledge, which gives First Steps \$25,000 annually, is the initiative's first major gift.

First Steps aims to prepare all children for school by coordinating and expanding services available to children 5 and younger. "It's startling that six out of 10 children entering kindergarten in Rochester schools aren't fully prepared for that first day of school," said Home Federal Savings Bank President Mike McNeil in a statement.

"As we look forward to the first day of school this week, we're reminded that children need much more during their early development years."

Created by the Rochester Area Foundation, First Steps prepares children for school through several methods. The initiative seeks to make kindergarten readiness a community priority while strengthening family participation in early learning. First Steps also measures early care and education systems, and then creates incentives that encourage those systems to become more integrated.

Rochester Area Foundation Executive Director Steve Thornton said the money from Home Federal Savings Bank was a smart investment.

"Studies indicate that investments in early childhood development can range as high as 18 percent a year," he said. "That's extraordinary value down the road to those who invest in this program today."

Thornton said First Steps will cost \$4 million across five years.

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