



# Stories

Kindergarten readiness for our community's future

## Fall calendar

Full details on these and other events can be found at [www.FirstSteps.us](http://www.FirstSteps.us).

### Sept. 6:

Art Rolnick, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, speaks during a noon luncheon at The Kahler Grand Hotel, Rochester. He has crafted studies on the economics of early childhood development.

### Sept. 13:

Teddy Bear Band - Entertaining and educating families of preschoolers, free, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., Century High School, Rochester. The Teddy Bear Band has been inspiring movement, imagination and fun for children, families and teddy bears for many years.

### Oct. 12:

David Lawrence, president of Early Childhood Initiative Foundation, speaks at a noon luncheon at The Kahler Grand Hotel, Rochester. Come hear this dynamic speaker tell why he's devoted his retirement years to promoting early childhood development.

## Guest speaker kicks off initiative

### ■ Fed economist promotes early childhood development

**A**rt Rolnick feels strongly about the investment that businesses can make in early childhood programs. He feels so strongly about the issue that he's taken a leadership role in Minnesota and the nation to explain why these programs make sense.

That's why the Rochester Area Foundation's First Steps initiative has asked Mr. Rolnick to speak in Rochester at 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 6. We think it's an important message that all businesses and organizations in Olmsted County should hear.

While early childhood programs rarely are portrayed as economic development initiatives, studies prove that well-focused investments in early childhood development yield high public and private returns. Recent studies suggest that these programs are grossly underfunded, yet if properly funded and managed, the investment yields an extraordinary return, far exceeding the return on most private and public investments.

It goes without saying that the return on investment in early childhood is extraordinary, which results in better working public schools, more educated workers and less crime. You cannot overlook the costs of not making such an important investment.

Do we need to consider this in Rochester and



Art Rolnick is senior vice president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

Olmsted County? The numbers indicate that more than 60 percent of our children are not fully prepared for school when they enter kindergarten. We think you'll agree we need to help our children be better prepared for school.

Please come join us for lunch at 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 6 in Heritage Hall in the subway of the Kahler Hotel in downtown Rochester. Cost for lunch is \$10, payable at the door, and is reduced thanks to a contribution from Wells Fargo Bank. If you can join us to hear Art Rolnick, please call us at 507.424.3755, Ext. 100, or send an e-mail to [RSVP@FirstSteps.us](mailto:RSVP@FirstSteps.us).

## Teddy Bear Band ready to entertain preschoolers

**T**he Teddy Bear Band has been inspiring movement, imagination and fun for children, families and teddy bears for many years.

The Rochester Area Foundation's First Steps initiative is sponsoring a visit to Rochester of the Teddy Bear Band and area preschoolers are invited to come BYOTB (Bring Your Own Teddy Bear).

The musical group will appear from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Century High School in Rochester. There will be

free transportation from Longfellow and Gage schools, departing at 5:45 p.m.; and Riverside and Elton Hills schools at 6 p.m. Parents must accompany children. Admission is free.

Children can become part of the show and enjoy a musical journey of imaginary rides, musical games, "Bear-robics" and more. This upbeat musical show is geared for a young audience and is adult-friendly, with lots of opportunity for family participation. Come welcome the Teddy Bear Band to Rochester!

## What has First Steps helped to fund?

Here are some things that First Steps funds have been used to help this year:

### Follow Along Program:

Olmsted County Public Health, to increase their capacity to serve parents of infants, now extended to all first-time parents in Olmsted County.

### SEEDS Training of the Trainer:

Funds were spent to train individuals who will provide in-depth early literacy training to child-care providers.

### Hand in Hand:

This will extend the capacity of Hand in Hand to serve additional families who benefit from in-home visitation by a family educator and interpreter.

# Busy launch for First Steps

## ■ Other events this fall

The appearance of the Teddy Bear Band and luncheon speeches by David Lawrence and Art Rolnick aren't the only events tied to the official rollout of First Steps by the Rochester Area Foundation.

On Sept. 10, a program called **Getting Ready for Kindergarten** will be hosted at the Rochester Public Library at 2 p.m. The program is an opportunity for family members, friends and neighbors who care for preschool-age children. If you want to be more intentional about providing children with the experiences and skills they need for kindergarten readiness, this session is for you. Call 507.285.8012 for information.

On Sept. 20, a **Grandparents Seminar** will be hosted at the Rochester Senior Center, 121 N. Broadway, Rochester, at 11:30 a.m. Grandparents attending will gain tools to help them ensure that preschool grandchildren and friends are fully ready for kindergarten. A free book will be given to participants and Barnes and Noble books will be available for sale following the seminar. Call 507.287.1404 to reserve a spot to attend.



*This new First Steps logo created for the Rochester Area Foundation shows K-Ready, our new mascot.*

## Ex-publisher to speak on readiness

David Lawrence Jr. retired in 1999 as publisher of The Miami Herald, but that really launched him into a new arena - the area of childhood development and readiness. Today he serves as president of the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation in Miami, Fla.

The Rochester Area Foundation's First Steps initiative is sponsoring a visit to Rochester by Lawrence on Oct. 12, where the dynamic speaker will address the community at a luncheon from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at The Kahler Grand Hotel. His message to the community will be specific to the efforts on kindergarten readiness here.

Lawrence also is a University Scholar for Early Childhood Development and Readiness at the University of Florida. In 2002, he led the successful campaign for The Children's Trust, a dedicated source of early intervention and prevention funding for children in Miami-Dade; he now serves as its chair.

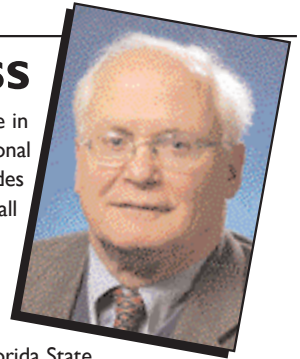
Named by Florida Gov. Jeb Bush to the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, he chaired that oversight board for two terms. He is a board member of the Foundation for Child Development in New York and the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation in Ypsilanti, Mich. In 2002-2003, he chaired the Florida Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Child Protection.

Then, in 2002, he was a key figure in passage of a statewide constitutional amendment in Florida that provides high-quality pre-K availability for all 4-year-olds beginning in the 2005 school year. He also served on the UPK (Universal Pre-K) Advisory Council that made recommendations in 2003 to the Florida State Board of Education and the Florida Legislature.

Lawrence was named by Gov. Bush in early 2003 as his "special assistant for universal pre-K implementation" to help get a high-quality program established in Florida. He is a board member and former chair of the Miami-Dade School Readiness Coalition.

The luncheon with David Lawrence will be held in the Kahler's subway-level Heritage Halls. Persons interested in attending need to make reservations before Oct. 5 by calling 507.282.1027 or by sending an e-mail to [RSVP@FirstSteps.us](mailto:RSVP@FirstSteps.us).

Cost of the luncheon is \$10 and meal service will begin at 11:30 a.m., with Lawrence's talk at noon.



# First Steps program ready to roll

## ■ Thanks to all who have helped so far

It's been an exciting few months since I came on board to the Rochester Area Foundation as the director of its new First Steps initiative.



**Taking steps**  
by  
**Kevin Ewing**  
First Steps director

While we're celebrating our official rollout of First Steps during the months of September and October - and we

hope you can come out and attend one of our planned events - we also know there is so much work ahead for us. Knowing that six out of every 10 children who come to kindergarten in Rochester schools aren't fully prepared for that first day of class, it will take the efforts of all our key planning partners, parents and caregivers to make this initiative successful over the years. Its success can't be measured over night. Truly, we may not know how successful First Steps is until today's babies graduate from high school well down the road.

First Steps really is a comprehensive

## Director is former principal, teacher

First Steps Director Kevin Ewing comes to the Rochester Area Foundation with a strong background in education.

Prior to his new position at the foundation, Ewing was associate principal at Gage Elementary School in Rochester for four years. He previously was principal of Lincoln K-8 Choice School and associate principal of Sunset Terrace Elementary schools. He also had served as a teacher in Rochester Public Schools.

He holds an educational specialist certificate and a master's degree in educational

approach in looking at the services currently being delivered to preschoolers and adding other necessary programs. Often we get calls to our office asking how someone can sign up their children for "First Steps," but all we can do is explain that we're a collaborative effort and that parents and other caregivers need to contact those agencies that are delivering the services, such as Child Care Resource and Referral or Olmsted County Public Health.

We hope you notice our advertising on TV and radio and in the newspaper during our official launch period this fall. We welcome your input, too, on First Steps.

If you are interested in learning more about First Steps, please take a look at our web site at [www.FirstSteps.us](http://www.FirstSteps.us). Our staff has placed some initial information there, but we will be presenting a complete new look to the web site beginning Sept. 1. If you look at our web site before Sept. 1, make sure you look after Sept. 1, too, because there will be much more information available. As with most web sites, too, it probably will be a work in progress.

*Kevin Ewing can be reached directly at 507.424.3755, Ext. 103, or by e-mail at [kevin@FirstSteps.us](mailto:kevin@FirstSteps.us).*

leadership from Winona State University and bachelor's degrees in elementary education and K-12 art education also from Winona State.

Ewing served as a member of the advisory council for Parents Are Important In Rochester (PAIIR) and on the boards of Child Care Resource and Referral and Voices for Children.

He is currently researching the effects of chronic stress from poverty on brain development and the child's capacity to learn and hopes to turn the information into a future book.

## First Steps staff

### First Steps director:

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### Offices:

Rochester Area Foundation Center

2200 Second St. SW, Suite 300

Rochester MN 55902-4125

Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays

## Advisory committee

David Stenhaus, *chair*

Al DeBoer

Audrey Betcher

Barb Mathias

Carol Kamper

Jackie Silver

Jane Campion

Joe Duffy

Karen Erlenbusch

Margo Herman

Marilyn Deling

Patrick Gannon

Paul Fleissner

Peggy O'Toole-Martin

Robyn Klemm

Sheryl Tasler

Shiek Nor Qassim

Vivien Johnson

Mary Wellik

Zelda Collins Moore

### Meetings:

Members of the First Steps advisory committee meet at 4 p.m. on the fourth Monday of the month in the board meeting room at the Rochester Area Foundation Center at 2200 Second St. SW, Rochester, Minn.

## First Steps retooling its home on the web

In an effort to offer important information for parents, caregivers and professionals, First Steps is retooling its web site.

With a brand new logo and new information, the new First Steps web site that will be officially launched and placed online Sept. 1 will offer expanded information to help parents understand the development stages of their preschool children and offer activities, too.

The web site also will offer information for professionals as well as tips for caregivers.

For information, visit our site at [www.FirstSteps.us](http://www.FirstSteps.us).

## Speakers available

Looking for a speaker for your organization's next meeting? The Rochester Area Foundation staff can bring you information about our new First Steps initiative. Call 507.282.1027 for information.

## Help make a difference for our children

Return coupon to:

### Rochester Area Foundation - First Steps

2200 Second St. SW, Suite 300  
Rochester MN 55902-4125  
or fax to 507.282.4938 / or e-mail info to [info@RochesterArea.org](mailto:info@RochesterArea.org)

### Check one:

I'm interested in making a special gift to the Rochester Area Foundation to benefit the First Steps initiative.

Enclosed please find a gift to the Rochester Area Foundation for the First Steps initiative.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Kindergarten readiness for our community's future**

CURRENT RESIDENT OR

■ Do we have your name and address correct? If not, please call us at 507.282.0203 or e-mail us at [info@RochesterArea.org](mailto:info@RochesterArea.org).

**Your Fall 2005 report**



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