



# FOCUS

## Recent grants

More than \$133,000 in grants was awarded recently by the Rochester Area Foundation.

Grants included:

- Friends of the Quarry Hill Nature Center, \$18,000 from the foundation's general fund and \$7,000 from donor-advised funds to support its Traveling Naturalist Program.

- Rochester Area Family YMCA, \$26,000, capital campaign for facility renovation and expansion.

- Rochester Art Center, \$15,000, assist in re-examining finances and strategic direction, including reassessing systems, staffing, processes, operations and programs at its new facility.

- The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Olmsted County, \$5,000, three-year project to hire a part-time volunteer coordinator who would involve mental health consumers and family members as volunteers in the delivery of programs designed to empower families and support professionals.

## It's all downhill for these skiers

### ■ Foundation helps fund RADAR's adaptive program

Joe Peplinski had an idea. He wanted to bring a program closer to home, and a recent grant from the Rochester Area Foundation has helped accomplish that.

During his senior year of high school in Winona, Peplinski was struck by a car while riding on a motorcycle with a friend. The accident left him a paraplegic, never to walk again. Never to look behind, he moved forward with his life.

Even though he is wheelchair-bound, the avid golfer from Pine Island has developed a new passion - downhill skiing. He attended a demonstration in 2003 at Welch Village that was put on by Rochester Area Disabled Athletics and Recreation Inc. (RADAR). At that program, Courage Center of Golden Valley sent ski instructors to help the six disabled prospective skiers.

Peplinski was strapped into something called a mono ski, a specially built ski chair that allowed him to head down the hill. He had to learn how to stay upright, something that takes months of experience. While mono skiers aren't thrown from their device because they are strapped in, it still hurts when you fall over. Instructors assist along the trails with the mono skiers.

That first session at Welch Village went so well that Peplinski enrolled in an adaptive alpine ski program at a Bloomington slope, the closest program at the time. He continued to attend weekly sessions throughout the ski season, but decided that it would make sense for a program to be closer to home.

This winter, after working out a plan with RADAR Executive Director Loretta Verbout, an alpine ski program will get under way at Steeplechase Ski Area between Oronoco and Mazeppa. A committee has been working over the past few months to provide a plan and train instructors for the downhill alpine skiing program. Equipment is in the process of being purchased, too.

An \$8,000 grant from the Rochester Area Foundation's Jenny Mo field-of-interest fund will help with the training costs and the purchase of equipment for the adaptive downhill alpine ski program.



*The mono ski is used during a January session at Steeplechase Ski Area.*

Equipment to be purchased includes mono skis used with "outriggers" (poles with skis), bi skis (two runners) and snow gliders (used by disabled skiers who can stand but who are not strong). The latter two types of equipment are used with two other skiers who are tethered to the disabled skier.

In a letter supporting the application for the grant, Peplinski cited his new ability to share an activity with his family and how he would like to see a local program much like the one he participated in the Twin Cities area.

"While I have participated in the Courage Program, I have been touched by the smiles on the individuals' faces as they prepared to go on the slopes," he said in the letter, adding: "I also have seen the great disappointment when they found out that there was not enough equipment or enough volunteers to allow them to ski that particular day."

Rochester Area Disabled Athletics and Recreation Inc. is a non-profit organization promoting recreation and athletics for individuals with a disability in the Rochester and Southeastern Minnesota area since 1985. It was created and developed by a group of citizens to enhance the local quality of life for individuals with a disability.

RADAR's governing board has worked cooperatively with community organizations and businesses to encourage the development of wheelchair basketball, track, bowling, archery, hunting, fishing, golf, game night, movie night and other sports and leisure activities.

# Bush Foundation sends funds for First Steps

## ■ \$80,000 to aid new initiative

The Rochester Area Foundation has received its first significant grant for its innovative First Steps school readiness program.

The foundation received notice late last year of a grant totaling \$80,000 from the Bush Foundation in St. Paul, Minn. The grant was among more than \$8.8 million allocated to 56 organizations by the Bush Foundation Board of Directors in November.

First Steps is a collaborative public-private economic development program being spearheaded by the Rochester Area Foundation to assure area children are ready for school when they enter kindergarten. The First Steps initiative will provide a comprehensive plan to meet the early education needs of children ages 0-6 and position the community for future economic success.

Today, nearly four out of every 10 children are unprepared to start school. An investment in early education is expected to pay significant dividends to the community in the future. School readiness is not just awareness of numbers or letters. It is health, good motor skills and language development. It also is curiosity, the capacity to share with other children and the ability to follow through on a goal.

Early childhood is a critical time for brain development.



*This is the new First Steps logo created for the Rochester Area Foundation.*

Scientists conclude that the human brain is largely sculpted by age 5 and the care children receive at home and day care powerfully affects their emotions and ability to learn.

First Steps will be a communitywide collaborative. Key

planning partners include: Rochester Area Foundation, Family Action Collaborative (FACES), Rochester Public Schools, Child Care Resource and Referral, Olmsted County Public Health, Olmsted County Community Services, Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce and United Way of Olmsted County.

In addition to the \$80,000 grant, the Rochester Area Foundation Board of Trustees has committed a total of \$500,000 to the initiative, or \$100,000 per year for five years. The program comes with a \$4 million price tag for the first five years and fund-raising efforts are under way to carry out the initiative. The cost per child age 0-6 in our community comes to about \$65 per year.

## Endowments aid flexibility in giving

Among the most desirable gifts to the Rochester Area Foundation are those to our new Endowments for Community Excellence, which are five permanent endowments to help ensure the long-term success of your community foundation and the many organizations it supports.

These new funds, announced late last year during the 60th anniversary of our founding, allow donors to choose an area of interest that will help support the future of our community.

Gifts to the Endowments for Community Excellence allow donors to focus their contributions in ways that have significant impact because the work of your foundation directly or indirectly touches every life in our community in some way.

The five funds are:

■ **Education and Lifelong Learning Endowment:** Gifts to this fund makes possible creative educational programming that exposes students to new ideas, careers and cultures. Gifts also help launch new programs and strengthen established programs with new equipment. The fund also supports building programs that expand area education and lifelong learning facilities.

■ **Community Development Endowment:** This fund offers the opportunity to ensure a bright future for the youngest to the oldest area residents, for those who are healthy and those who live with challenges, for those who are facing financial hardship, and for those who are eager to see their children learn and grow in healthy ways.

### ■ Arts and Culture

**Endowment:** Gifts help support many forms of music, including instrumental and vocal groups, special events such as jazz festivals, civic theater productions, and the preservation of our area's historical roots and traditions for people of all ages.

### ■ Youth Athletics and Recreation

**Endowment:** Donors to this fund have the satisfaction of providing opportunities to participate in recreational activities to citizens of all ages and athletic capabilities and the knowledge they have strengthened the quality of life for thousands in our area.

■ **Scholarship Endowment:** For a half-century, the Rochester Area Foundation has dispersed scholarship funds to organizations and institutions that advance education and related services through many forums in our community. Scholarships help promote quality of opportunity and recognize outstanding achievement - from infants to college students.

The Rochester Area Foundation is uniquely positioned to keep a pulse on organizations and their needs. If you are interested in making a gift of any size to the new Endowments for Community Excellence, please call us at (507) 282-0203 or e-mail us at [info@RochesterArea.org](mailto:info@RochesterArea.org) and request our special brochure that describes these funds in greater detail.



# Ribbon-cutting opens new office

## ■ Chamber helps with official ceremonies

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was conducted by the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors to commemorate the new home for Rochester Area Foundation and First Homes.

The foundation's staff moved into the former Hirman Insurors building at 2200 Second St. SW on Dec. 1. Staff has been converting the space inside the spacious offices since then to best suit current staffing levels. Cubicle space was redesigned and a former kitchen has been converted into a new board meeting room to be used for large meetings on site.

Approximately 40 persons attended the event, held over the noon hour with a light lunch, on Jan. 14. The event also



*The Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors perform the official ribbon-cutting ceremony for the foundation's offices.*

was covered by KAAL Channel 6 and KTTC Channel 10.

A reminder that our new mailing address is:

**Rochester Area Foundation  
First Homes  
2200 Second St. SW, Suite 300  
Rochester MN 55902-4125**

Our phone and fax numbers, e-mail and web sites remain unchanged.

## Local realty group sets up donor fund

A local realty firm has set up a donor-advised fund with the Rochester Area Foundation.

The new RE/MAX of Rochester fund was created by donations made annually by agents at local RE/MAX office. The fund was set up to make donations to three core community assets that the firm supports:

■ **Children:** The "Underwriting a Dream" scholarship for students entering Rochester Technical and Community College provides an annual stipend for four years as long as the student maintains credentials and progresses toward a degree. The scholarship is given to students who otherwise would be unable to seek education because of a lack of money and their inability to get other scholarships, grants or loans. The scholarship is renewed automatically and helps remove obstacles and concerns for obtaining funds.

■ **Food in a time of need:** Assistance is given to agencies such as United Way's Community Net, the Senior



Center and Community Food Response so agencies that supply food can remain a community resource.

■ **Structural community assets:** Organizations receiving funds include Rochester Area Economic Development Inc. (RAEDI), Rochester Civic Theater and Rochester Orchestra and Chorale.

The agents behind the fund hope it continues to grow.

"We are interested in the fund continuing to have a growing corpus so that in the event of an identified one-time need, we have funds available for us to advise the (Rochester Area Foundation) board of our desire to support a single opportunity to help when money will make a difference," Duane Sauke, broker/owner of RE/MAX of Rochester, said. "We expect the corpus to grow each year."

## Foundation staff

### Executive director:

Steve Thornton | [steve@RochesterArea.org](mailto:steve@RochesterArea.org)

### Communications/ program officer:

Chuck Gysi | [chuck@RochesterArea.org](mailto:chuck@RochesterArea.org)

### Administrative assistant:

Karen Houff | [karen@RochesterArea.org](mailto:karen@RochesterArea.org)

### Grants administrator:

Jane Campion | [jane@RochesterArea.org](mailto:jane@RochesterArea.org)

### First Homes executive director:

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### First Homes program officers:

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**Office:**

2200 Second St. SW, Suite 300

Rochester MN 55902-4125

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

## Board of Trustees

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### Meetings:

Members of the Rochester Area Foundation's Board of Trustees meet at noon on the third Monday of the month in the board meeting room at the foundation's offices at 2200 Second St. SW, Rochester, Minn.

## Work continues on foundation's web sites

Consider them works in progress. The Rochester Area Foundation's three web sites continue to undergo work to bring them up to date. Long dormant, the foundation's primary web site at [www.RochesterArea.org](http://www.RochesterArea.org) finally has been improved to offer basic information about the foundation. Information continues to be added to round out current missing links. Work is expected to finish this spring. Work on the First Homes initiative's web site at [www.FirstHomes.org](http://www.FirstHomes.org), which was retooled recently, continues to be updated with information about the housing program. Lastly, a new web site at [www.FirstSteps.us](http://www.FirstSteps.us) is expected to go on line this spring with information about the new school readiness initiative being launched by the Rochester Area Foundation. Info? Send an e-mail to [webmaster@RochesterArea.org](mailto:webmaster@RochesterArea.org).

## Make a gift to your community foundation

Return coupon to:

### Rochester Area Foundation

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 our community.

Enclosed please find a gift to the Rochester Area Foundation.

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

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

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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 Winter 2005 report**

Rochester Area Foundation



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Rochester MN 55902-4125

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