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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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**NOTE TO EDITORS:** We invite your coverage of this important event on June 3. I'll send out a reminder right before our celebration.

**For immediate release**  
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### **First Homes' \$13.1M fund-raising accomplishment to be celebrated; donors to be recognized**

A program to celebrate Rochester Area Foundation's accomplishment of raising more than \$13 million for its innovative First Homes program will be a part of ceremonies in the rotunda of the Rochester-Olmsted County Government Center on June 3.

In addition to recognizing efforts to raise \$13.1 million for the program that helps provide starter homes for working families in a 30-mile radius of Rochester, the foundation also will recognize its First Homes donors with a unique permanent display.

Since First Homes' inception in 1999, the \$13.1 million raised to date has helped leverage an additional \$115 million in additional donations and funds from other agencies to assist income-qualified homebuyers purchase starter homes.

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First Homes is well on its way toward its goal of 875 new residences. Since funding kicked off in 2000, more than 500 new residences have been built with First Homes' funds. The total includes 275 new single-family homes and 225 new below-market-rate rental units.

The event at the Government Center will take on the theme of an old-fashioned block party with picnic fare and the Chatfield Brass Band providing musical entertainment. The theme of the program is: "We have new neighbors," a reference to the hundreds of Southeastern Minnesotans now living in First Homes housing.

Speakers at the ceremony will include Dr. Hugh Smith, chair of the Mayo Clinic Board of Governors; Tim Marx, commissioner of the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency; Dover Mayor Roger Ihrke; First Homes board member Jeff Vert, who also is a First Homes homeowner; First Homes board chair Karel Weigel; and Joe Powers, owner of the Canadian Honker.

Marx, a Rochester native, will present a proclamation from Gov. Tim Pawlenty at the event to recognize June as Homeownership Month in Minnesota.

"While we're taking the time to celebrate the attainment of our initial fund-raising goal with this event, we continue to raise funds for the program as the need for starter homes still exists in Southeastern Minnesota," Steve Thornton, executive director of Rochester Area Foundation, said.

First Homes single-family homes and rental units have been built in Byron, Dover, Grand Meadow, Hayfield, Kasson, Pine Island, Plainview, Rochester and Spring Valley.

"The First Homes project is a unique collaborative that has paired businesses, individuals, non-profits and government to accomplish the construction of starter homes for working families throughout the region," First Homes Executive Director Sean Allen said. "The program already has used more than \$50 million in leveraged funds to get hundreds of families in new homes and below-market-rate apartments."

The event on June 3 will start at 5 p.m. Persons wishing to attend should call (507) 282-0203 for reservations.

Meanwhile, the Rochester Area Foundation continues to accept donations for First Homes; call (507) 282-0203 for information.

For more information on First Homes, call (507) 287-7117 or visit <http://www.FirstHomes.org> on the Web.