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First Steps Kent Unveils Strategic Expansion to Enhance Early Childhood Development

Introducing the Impact Team: A Strategic Force for Positive Change in Kent County

(Grand Rapids, Mich., Jan. 16, 2024) —In a move aimed at enhancing its commitment to early childhood development, First Steps Kent announces transformative initiatives for the future. Jennifer Headley-Nordman, President of First Steps Kent, shares exciting news about the organization's strategic evolution since her assumption of leadership in October 2022.

Recognizing the imperative for thoughtful leadership and agility in addressing emerging opportunities and challenges in the early childhood space, First Steps Kent introduces the establishment of an impactful 'Impact Team.' This team will play a pivotal role in aligning systems, shaping policies, fostering parent involvement, and securing funding for both First Steps Kent and its partner organizations.

Leading the charge as the Vice President of Impact is Christine Timbol Larson, who brings invaluable experience from her role as Senior Funding Administrator in the Ready by Five team. Larson holds a Master of Nonprofit Leadership and Management from the University of San Diego and a Bachelor of Communication from San Diego State University. Joining Larson on the Impact Team are Megan Streng, assuming the role of Communications Director, and Daniel VanderMolen, transitioning from the Mainspring team to become the Director of Policy and Grants.

In addition to the Impact Team, First Steps Kent introduces three specialized teams, each with a dedicated team lead. Cati Cortes will lead the Business team, Kristen Sobolewski will spearhead Early Care and Education, and Heather Boswell will take charge of the Ready by Five team.

President Jennifer Headley-Nordman articulates her vision for this transition, affirming, 'I believe that these changes will help First Steps Kent strengthen its support and reach. It will help us track our progress more effectively, refine our strategies, and ensure that our initiatives lead to the desired results. Ultimately, these changes will result in better allocation of resources and a more aligned funding structure, contributing to the overall success of the early childhood system.'

Acknowledging potential challenges during the transition, Headley-Nordman reassures stakeholders of the organization's commitment to providing the necessary support.

This strategic evolution aligns with First Steps Kent's ongoing dedication to early childhood development, building on the success of existing programs and partnerships that contribute to the health, school readiness, and overall well-being of children aged five and younger.

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About First Steps Kent: First Steps Kent is an independent nonprofit organization that works with parents, service providers, funders, advocates, and other stakeholders to build a comprehensive early childhood system in Kent County. Our community vision is that every young child in Kent County will enter kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed in school and life. First Steps Kent is working with our community partners to make that vision a reality. Learn more at www.firststepskent.org.