FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 4, 2010

Contact:
Lynette Loomis
Greater Rochester Health Foundation
585-258-1717 (office)
585-730-0278 (cell)
LLoomis@thegrhf.org

Lunch Bunch

Rochester City School District teacher Amy Shema has given new life to an old concept — eating lunch with her students. For the past three years, Shema has invited 4-6 students to eat lunch with her each day, bringing various fruits, vegetables, and healthy meals for them to try. Greater Rochester Health Foundation has awarded Shema with the Healthy Hero Award for her efforts to improve the nutrition of her students.

“I ask that everyone try the foods, and if they don't like it, to just say, 'No, thank you,' says Shema. “I have been so impressed and surprised by the students' reactions. They love it! The students actually ask for more fruit and put their cookies away! I have one student who asks every Lunch Bunch if I have brought squash today — he is a second-grader. After the first year that I had Lunch Bunch with the first-graders, I realized that they were talking to their peers about what they were learning about food. I have to admit, I look forward to Lunch Bunch as much as the students do. My favorite part, is witnessing a child who might be skeptical of a food at first and then after trying it, loves it.”

“Shema was motivated to know her students on a more personal level, outside of the typical 'academic' situation, and has shown creativity and perseverance in helping kids learn about new foods,” says John Urban, president and CEO of the Foundation. “One impact she has seen is that students are asking their parents to buy fruits and vegetables at home. Parents have told her that their children were telling them about a certain food that they ate at school, and wanted to eat more of at home. The children are introducing parents and siblings to new foods. Even at school when her students are given a choice for a snack, they choose fruit. Eating more fruits and vegetables is one of the four goals of our Be A Healthy Hero campaign, and Shema is showing kids how to be Healthy Heroes themselves.”

The Foundation recognizes people who go beyond their normal duties to help kids age 2-10 in the Greater Rochester area stay healthy through improved children's nutrition and/or increased physical activity. People interested in nominating Healthy Heroes may visit www.beahealthyhero.org. Healthy Heroes are awarded $250 to be donated to the organization of their choice.