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## **First Niagara Launches its Fifth Annual Mentoring Matters<sup>SM</sup> Program with \$500,000 Funding Available Statewide**

BUFFALO, N.Y.— First Niagara kicked off its 2011 Mentoring Matters program today by announcing a total of \$500,000 funding available statewide for non-profit organizations dedicated to mentoring initiatives. The bank is encouraging not-for-profit organizations in Upstate New York to apply for funding.

Celebrating its fifth year, Mentoring Matters provides critical financial and volunteer support for mentoring efforts conducted throughout the Northeast to reinforce the importance and showcase the positive impact mentoring has on the lives of today's youth. In 2011, Mentoring Matters will top the \$2.5 million total grant mark in Upstate New York – positively impacting more than 15,000 youth in more than 175 organized mentoring programs. In total, First Niagara will have provided more than \$3.25 million to support mentoring efforts conducted throughout its Upstate New York, Pennsylvania, and New England service areas.

Interested Upstate New York non-profits can visit

<http://www.fnfg.com/InTheCommunity/Mentoring/> to begin the grant application process.

The maximum grant awarded by First Niagara is \$25,000; the minimum grant awarded is \$5,000. The deadline for submissions is **Sept. 2**.

“Mentoring is a strong factor that so often leads to positive changes in the professional, academic, social, emotional, and cognitive growth of young adults,” said Peter Cosgrove, Upstate New York Regional President for First Niagara. “Through Mentoring Matters we are able to make a significant difference in children’s lives by supporting the inspiring achievements made by non-profit organizations committed to mentoring our communities’ future leaders.”

### **About First Niagara**

First Niagara Financial Group, Inc., through its wholly owned subsidiary First Niagara Bank, N.A., has \$31 billion in assets, \$19 billion in deposits, 346 branches and approximately 5,000 employees, as of June 30, 2011. First Niagara is a community-oriented bank providing financial services to individuals, families and businesses across Upstate New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Massachusetts. For more information visit [www.fnfg.com](http://www.fnfg.com).

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