

Fred Rogers

By MisterRogers.org

"As human beings, our job in life is to help people realize how rare and valuable each one of us really is, that each of us has something that no one else has- or ever will have- something inside that is unique to all time. It's our job to encourage each other to discover that uniqueness and to provide ways of developing its expression."



Fred McFeely Rogers, also known as Mister Rogers, was born on March 20, 1928. He was the creator, showrunner, and host of the preschool television series Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, which ran from 1968 to 2001.

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Fred Rogers grew up in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. Fred always loved Latrobe, which became the basis for the television neighborhood he later created. He was known for his creativity, kindness, spirituality, and commitment to the well-being of children. Lovingly called “America’s favorite neighbor,” he used his many diverse talents to inspire, nurture, and educate. Not only was Fred Rogers a pioneer in children’s media, but he also was an artist, minister, composer and musician, environmentalist, and advocate for children and families. With his gentle, unassuming manner, he made a profound impression on everyone he encountered.

In the early 1960s, Fred was briefly enticed to a public television job for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in Toronto, where he became an on-air performer for the first time. His work there, on a show titled Misterogers, helped shape and develop the concept and style of his later program for the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in the U.S.

When Fred and his wife, Joanne, started their family, they decided to come home to Pittsburgh and raise their two young sons there. He soon introduced Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood, produced at WQED-Pittsburgh and initially broadcast regionally through the Eastern Educational Network, Fred began building an extraordinarily powerful audience of some national scope for his public television program. When WGBH in Boston held an open house for Fred Rogers and his crew in Boston, they expected about 500 people to attend. They were overwhelmed with 10,000 visitors lined up outside the station. In 1968, Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood became a national program seen on public television all across the U.S. By 1971, Fred had founded Family Communications, Inc., the production company that has managed his work ever since.

After a little more than a decade working in children’s television, Fred’s reputation as a champion of high standards for children’s programming and for television in general was well established. It was highlighted by his now-famous testimony before Congress in 1969, in which he brought flinty politicians and the rest of the audience to tears with his simple, genuine, and powerful plea for better television for children. The result was a sharp jump in federal funding for PBS. But television continued then, as it does today, to produce programming that research has found to be often damaging and degrading to children. Part of Fred’s vision for the Fred Rogers Center was that it would continue his fight to advance the development and appropriate use of responsible media for young children.

The legacy of Fred Rogers is of great importance; not just to children, though it surely is to them, but to all of us. And his thoughtful, sensitive, integrated approach can continue to be of great value to many future generations of children, through his programs and through the work of others who follow his example.