



PRESS RELEASE

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NATIONAL DISCUSSION ON OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE COMING TO THE FRED ROGERS CENTER

Saint Vincent College serves as the site for exploring technology, new media, and early learning

LATROBE, PA – On March 22 and 23, 2010, the [Fred Rogers Center](#) at [Saint Vincent College](#) will convene the inaugural Fred Forward Conference on the theme “Creative Curiosity, New Media, and Learning.” This event will bring together national leaders in education, research, technology, policy, and children’s media to explore how they can work together to use emerging technologies and new media in developmentally appropriate and educational ways.

Technology and new media have an incredibly influential role in the social, emotional, and intellectual development of our children. According to a [2008 study](#) by Yale University School of Medicine, the National Institutes of Health, and the California Pacific Medical Center, the average American child today spends 45 hours per week engaged with media, compared to 17 hours with parents and 30 hours in school. And, as reported in a [2009 Nielsen study](#), even very young children – aged two to five – now spend more than 32 hours per week in front of screen media. It is vitally important to the future of our children and our society that these interactions are managed constructively.

Addressing these issues will be senior executives from more than 60 national and international organizations including the Children and Nature Network, the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop, Families and Work Institute, Family Communications, Inc., LeapFrog, The George Lucas Educational Foundation, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Public Broadcasting Service; federal and state policy makers; and researchers from Carnegie Mellon University, the Center on Media and Child Health at Children’s Hospital in Boston, Harvard University, the Pew Internet and American Life Project, and the University of Pennsylvania.

“More than 50 years ago, Fred Rogers applied the emerging technology of his day, television, to create one of the most positive and influential programs in the history of the medium. The world is much different today, but the basic needs of children have not changed,” said Maxwell King, co-director of the Fred Rogers Center. “Our challenge now is to find ways in which the technology of our day can be harnessed for the benefit of children and families, in much the same way Fred did half a century ago.”

The Fred Rogers Center is also partnering with the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Technology Council, the southwestern Pennsylvania Kids + Creativity Group, and the Entertainment Technology Center at Carnegie Mellon University to create pre-conference “Innovation Showcases” that are open to the public. These events will demonstrate some of the truly innovative applications of art, technology, and media to early childhood learning created in the Pittsburgh region and will be open on the afternoons of March 20 and 21 at the Children’s Museum and at the Entertainment Technology Center on the afternoon of March 21.

In addition to the National Conference sessions and Innovation Showcases, the conference includes two important awards.

[The TEDx Leadership Pittsburgh Prize for Teachers](#) will be awarded by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit to three teachers in Allegheny County who have demonstrated unique applications of new ideas to teaching.

For the first time outside of Hollywood, the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences Foundation will present three graduate students with [Fred Rogers Memorial Scholarships](#). Since this scholarship program’s inception in 2004, students have been selected based on outstanding work in children’s media, and have been paired with a mentor from the Television Academy’s Children’s Programming Peer Group.

According to Rita Catalano, co-director of the Fred Rogers Center, “What we are attempting to do with the Fred Forward Conference is to preserve and nurture the capacity for creativity, curiosity, and love for learning that every child is born with by bringing together many of the adults who have the most influence over making that possible.”

Funding for the Fred Forward Conference is provided by The Grable Foundation, The Pittsburgh Foundation and The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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