

*Saint Vincent College Public Relations  
News Release*

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**Oct. 26, 2004**

**Announced by Pennsylvania Senator Allen Kukovich--Commonwealth of Pennsylvania commits \$5 Million to Fred M. Rogers Center at Saint Vincent College**

Pennsylvania State Senator Allen G. Kukovich announced that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has committed \$5 million to the construction of The Fred M. Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media at Saint Vincent College.

At a press conference in the Robert S. Carey Student Center, Senator Kukovich read a message from Governor Edward Rendell to publicly report major funding for the project in the 39th senatorial district. Senator Kukovich said that he was "proud to be able to bring the funding home for this important initiative."

Senator Kukovich said that the grant will be applied toward construction of the Center's planned \$12 million building project and would be made through the Pennsylvania Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP), a Commonwealth of Pennsylvania grant program administered by the Office of the Budget for the acquisition and construction of regional economic, cultural, civic and historical improvement projects.

"I am honored to be able to make this announcement on behalf of Governor Rendell and the people of Pennsylvania," Senator Kukovich said. "We all share enormous pride in the accomplishments of the late Fred Rogers, a native son whose life and work are well known throughout the world. We are equally proud that he and his wife decided, before his untimely death on February 27, 2003 at the age of 74, to locate the Center which would carry on his work at Saint Vincent College, near to the place of his birth in the very first Mister Rogers Neighborhood. And so it is very fitting that we become a major partner in this important project which will serve as a national and international resource for addressing emerging issues affecting children and families."

"We are certainly honored that Fred's widow, Joanne Byrd Rogers, could be here with us today to join us in celebrating this important milestone," Senator Kukovich added. "We are also happy that she brought Mr. McFeely with her to give "Speedy Delivery" to this important message from the governor and to entertain some of the many children from the New Horizons School and Daycare Center here at Saint Vincent College who are here with us today."

"I want to thank all of the state and local officials who have helped to make this grant possible," Senator Kukovich said.

Saint Vincent College President **James F. Will** responded by expressing his thanks, on behalf of the students, faculty, administrators and staff of Saint Vincent, to Senator Kukovich and the Commonwealth for recognizing the important work that the Center was committed to accomplishing. "This grant is a crucial step in fulfilling our vision for the Rogers Center," Mr. Will said.

"The Rogers Center facilities will include a multimedia center, special suites for the archives and for visiting experts in early learning and children's media, and an early learning demonstration center," Mr. Will explained. "The facilities will also accommodate larger conferences, workshops and meetings. The space design and the technological capabilities within the Rogers Center facilities will support our action plan by accommodating statewide and national seminars and conferences, the demonstration of effective early learning programs, and the application of multimedia for the communication of new knowledge and improved practices."

Saint Vincent College will construct the Rogers Center facilities on its campus in Latrobe. The total estimated cost of this building project will be \$12 million. Matching funds from private sources will support the remaining costs.

"Through its leadership programs, the expanded access to the Rogers archives, and its work in promoting and demonstrating effective practices, the Rogers Center responds to the need in Pennsylvania and nationally to improve educational and social supports for children at a critically formative stage of development," Mr. Will said. "Over the long term, the Center's strategic collaborations with other key organizations to influence the social-emotional-cognitive development of children will have an impact on school readiness, literacy, productivity and citizenship within the Commonwealth."

The Fred M. Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media at Saint Vincent College was established in September 2003 to serve as a national and international resource for addressing emerging issues affecting children and families. Staying true to the vision of Fred Rogers, and emulating the guiding principles of his life's work, the Center's mission is to advance the state of early learning and children's media by acting as a catalyst for communication, collaboration, and creative change across both fields.

"We are confident that this financial commitment will provide the motivation for others who share our concern for children to respond with generous gifts that will enable the Center to begin construction soon. I think all citizens of the Commonwealth will be pleased that Pennsylvania has taken this leadership role in ensuring that this project is one in which we can all take great satisfaction. Senator Kukovich has certainly been a great advocate for Saint Vincent College and for this region in Harrisburg."

The planning process for the Rogers Center extended over nearly three years and was guided for most of that time, until his death, by the personal involvement of Fred Rogers. In July 2003, the national Advisory Council assumed the central role in defining the mission and the action plan for the Rogers Center.

The search for the Executive Director of the Rogers Center is underway and will be completed by February 2005.

Dr. Milton Chen, Executive Director of The George Lucas Educational Foundation, is Chair of the Advisory Council, and Mrs. Joanne Byrd Rogers is Honorary Chair.

Nearly 70 experts from state and national organizations attended an invitational symposium held at Saint Vincent College in May 2004 for the purpose of helping to set the agenda for the Rogers Center. Organizations represented included the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Mark Ginsberg, Executive Director) and Pennsylvania Partnership for Children (Joan Benso, President and CEO), as well as the Pennsylvania Department of Education (Susan Enfield and Harriet Dichter). Based on symposium recommendations, the Center's Advisory Council endorsed an action plan which has the following focus areas:

- Through the Fred Rogers Leadership Institute for coalition building and professional development, to establish the Center's role as a broker for change in response to emerging issues in early learning and children's media.
- Through a broad-based communication program, to promote awareness and advocacy on behalf of children and families.
- Through the Fred Rogers archives, to develop the Center as the main repository and access point for materials and knowledge that define Fred Rogers and his approach.

"Our plans for the Rogers Center admittedly are ambitious -- in the best sense of the word," Mr. Will concluded. "Our ambition is inspired by Fred Rogers and driven by a commitment to the continued study and application of his approach to understanding, communicating with, and otherwise serving children and families."