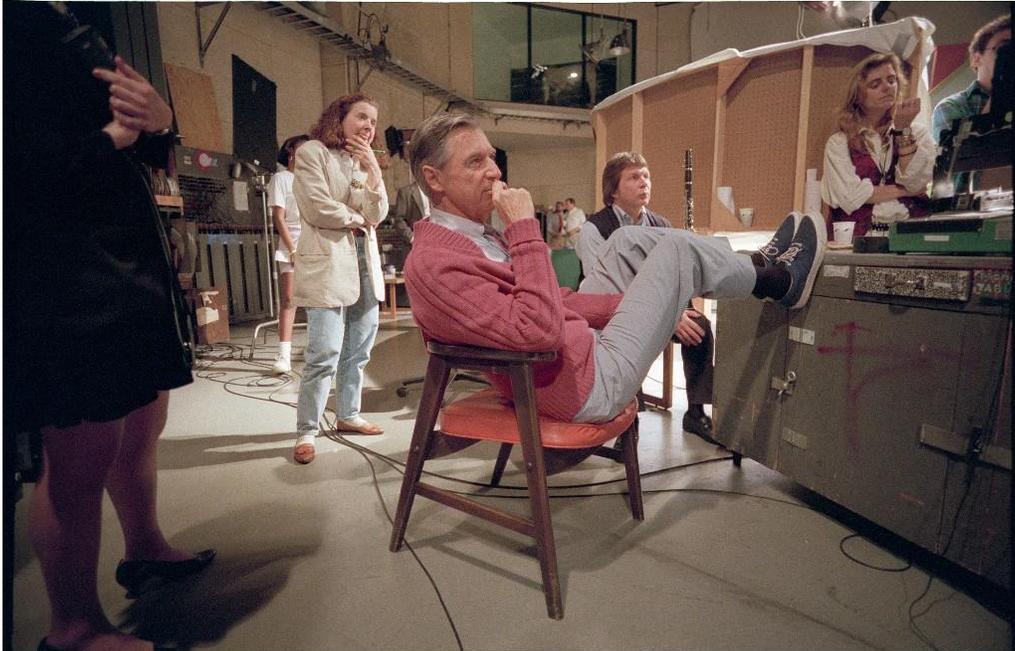




What We Can Continue to Learn from Fred Rogers



Neighborly Ways to Celebrate



I've always thought of the March newsletter as special because March 20 was Fred's birthday. This year, because it's the 50th anniversary of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* on PBS, the U.S. Post Office is making his birthday even more memorable by releasing a Commemorative Forever postage stamp featuring a portrait of Fred in his signature red sweater with his royal puppet, King Friday XIII!

Over the years, we celebrated Fred's birthday on March 20 by wearing a sweater – and doing something neighborly. Maybe you'd like to join in that tradition too.

I thought you might like to know why wearing a sweater became such an important part of the *Neighborhood* program, because some of those reasons are connected to your work with children.

Fred started the tradition of putting on a sweater on his very first *Neighborhood* episode. The program aired at 5 p.m., and the premise was that Mister Rogers was stopping by his “television house” on his way home from work to have a “visit” with his “television neighbors.” Changing from his suit jacket (which he wore at work) to a sweater and sneakers helped set a welcoming tone for a “visit.” In your own way, you, too, create a welcoming atmosphere that lets children know you’re there for them.

Fred also understood the importance of starting with a ritual. He changed to his sweater and sat on the bench to change to his sneakers. This predictability was one of the ways he was offering a sense of security and helping his younger viewers settle in to be ready for what’s next. Through your rituals and routine, you’re offering that to children, too.



As you can hear on this *Neighborhood* video, there was another, more personal reason why Fred wore those sweaters. When I watched it, I found a new appreciation for what “things” mean to children -- and to all of us.

The way Fred talked about his mother’s sweaters isn’t so different from the way children use “transition objects.” Those “things” (things that they can touch, smell,

see and hold) help children feel connected to their loved ones, even when they're apart. That's like the stories I have heard about some children who sleep better when they have some small item from their mother. Those personal things can be very comforting.

Maybe it's not so surprising, then, that in this long, cold winter, I find myself reaching for the scarf that my mother, who died over fifteen years ago, knitted for me. I hear that from some of my friends, too. One wears her mother's coat. Another wears his father's sweatshirt. We all are holding on to those "things" to feel connected to those important people in our lives and to remind us of who they were and how they helped us become who we are.

So if putting on something like a sweater is a way of connecting us with Fred and honoring him, maybe it can also remind us of Fred's kindness – and help us think of doing something kind and "neighborly" as a way of celebrating his birthday and his life.

Thank you for being our neighbor,



Hedda Sharapan

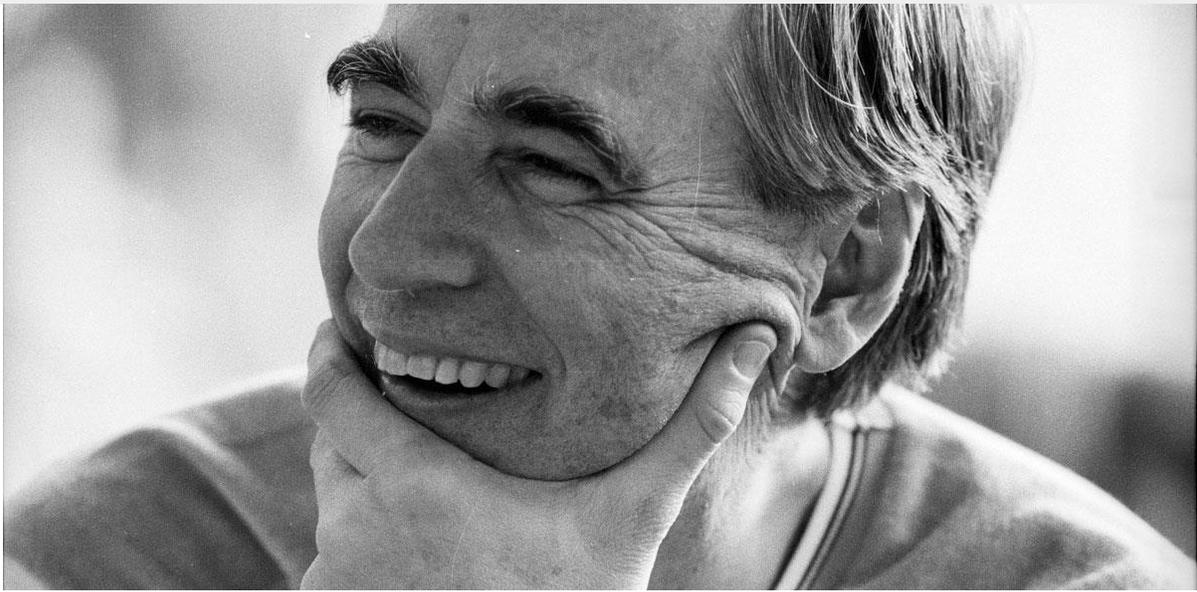
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P.S. Here's another idea – maybe you'd like to use the new postage stamps to send a note or a card or a letter to someone you care about to let them know you're thinking of them. As Fred often said, "There are many ways to say I care about you..."

Timeless Wisdom from Fred Rogers



"There are three ways to ultimate success:
The first way is to be kind.
The second way is to be kind.
The third way is to be kind."

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