

“Won’t
you be
my
Neighbor?”



Day

March 20, 2009

TOOL KIT

To help you celebrate what it means to be neighborly in your neighborhood.



CONTENTS:

- **Activity Ideas**
- **Creating Partnerships**
- **Fred Rogers’ Approach to Neighborliness**
- **Promotion Ideas**
- **Support Materials**



"Imagine what our real neighborhoods would be like if each of us offered as a matter of course, just one kind word to another person. One kind word has a wonderful way of turning into many."

— Fred Rogers

Dear Neighbors:

March 20th is "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" Day. It's a way to celebrate Fred Rogers' lifework of appreciating neighbors — on his birthday — by wearing a sweater and by reaching out to your neighbors.

We've marked this date to give organizations and institutions the opportunity to create an event that encourages the people in their communities to be caring neighbors. Launched locally in 2008 as a part of Pittsburgh's 250th anniversary, "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" Day was so successful that it's now become an annual national event.

Based on what we've learned from participating groups last year, we've put together this tool kit with some ideas that we hope you'll find helpful as you plan your "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" Day events.

As TV Guide said, "TV is all about coveting, but *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* is about appreciating what you already have, and about caring for others and seeing the best in them.

Thanks for participating...and thanks for being our neighbor!

Margy Whitmer
Project Director





Activity Ideas

There are lots of opportunities to be creative, resourceful, inventive, and imaginative. Choose an event that's a good fit for your organization and your community. Keep in mind, this day is about being neighborly and being connected...so do whatever you can to connect with people, families, and organizations in your area. Your event can help you create something that's especially important in these stressful economic times — a sense of community and neighborliness.

- Encourage everyone on your staff and in your community to **wear a sweater**.
- Sponsor a *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* **Sweater Drive**. For more information, see the [Sweater Drive tool kit](#).
- Host a **story time**. You can use the [booklist](#) created for us by our partners at the Association for Service to Children (a division of the American Library Association) for story ideas. You could also search for an underwriter so you can give away free books.
- Offer a neighborhood themed **art or craft activity**. One that's been especially successful is building a model tabletop neighborhood from boxes and throwaways. (See [Build a Neighborhood](#) directions.)
- Set up a **“green” workshop** with a representative from a local environmental group to help families learn how to help your community become a “green” community. Or organize a community “clean-up” day.



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Activity Ideas

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Getting Started

- Decide how you want to participate in “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” Day.
 - Choose activities that will be part of your event.
 - Pick a date. Fred Rogers’ birthday is March 20, so that’s the official “Won’t You Be My Neighbor” Day. But you can schedule your event(s) within a week before or after the date – whatever works best for your situation.
- Choose who’s in charge of the event
 - Make a schedule — what needs to be done, by whom and when. Remember that a lot has to happen beforehand to make it a success.
 - Find partners
- Promote and publicize, keeping in mind publication deadlines — yours as well as general media.
 - Work with volunteers if needed.

- Organize a **“Meet your neighbor”** session. Invite community neighbors — police, firefighters, postal workers, barbers, chefs — to meet with children and families to talk about who they are and what they do.
- Sponsor a **food drive**.
- Plan a **puppet-making** workshop.
- If you’re an institution that charges admission, consider having a **free day** or offering a discount.
- Have your event as an **open house** so people get to know who you are and what you do. It always helps to serve refreshments.
- Involve the **knitting** community so they can make mittens, caps or sweaters to donate as part of your event.
- Plan **interactive** events for families.
- Invite **local performers** to perform in your space in order to enrich children’s lives with cultural experiences in music, dance, and theater.
- Ask the **Animal Rescue League** to offer a clinic to talk about simple rules of being a responsible pet owner.
- Plan a **“Volunteer Day.”** Invite organizations that use volunteers to offer information sessions about how people can get involved.
- Coordinate agencies that serve children with those that serve **senior citizens**. (In Pittsburgh, the United Way did a mini-Day of Caring in which young children visited nursing home residents, made cards for them, read books together.)





Mister Rogers' Neighborhood Sweater Drive Tool Kit

We originally created the *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood Sweater Drive tool kit* for PBS stations as one way they could celebrate *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* on PBS. As you read through the materials, you'll see that some of the information is specifically for PBS stations, but you can follow the general guidelines and adapt them to fit your event.

**MISTER
ROGERS'
NEIGHBORHOOD®**



**SWEATER
.....
DRIVE**





Creating Partnerships

Working with partners is a great way to extend the feeling of neighborliness, as well as making your event more effective. But keep in mind that partnerships can sometimes be challenging and they require compromise and flexibility.

Here are some successful partnerships from the past events:

- A children's museum hosted performances by symphony musicians.
- A child care center partnered with a nursing home for intergenerational activities.
- A museum partnered with a community service organization, bringing a firefighter and a police officer to talk with children.
- A library partnered with the Brownies to do a sweater drive and to plant flowers in front of the library later in the spring.
- A theatre partnered with a musical group to offer a performance for families in the community.
- An art museum partnered with a child care center to offer free admission and to do puppet workshops.

Here are some things to keep in mind as you work together with your partner(s):

- Make it a priority to coordinate your efforts. Be clear about each partner's responsibility, so that every aspect of the event goes smoothly.
- Have representatives of each organization at the event to explain the partnership and the connection with "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" Day.
- Schedule an evaluation meeting between the partners after the event. These partnerships for "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" Day can be just the beginning of a partnership that can last all through the year.



One of our partners

Family Communications is pleased to be partnering with the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association, for "Won't You Be my Neighbor?" Day. They've compiled a [booklist](#) of appropriate books for children and grownups about being neighborly. Be sure to contact them in your neighborhood so that you can work together on your events.



Fred Rogers' Approach to Neighborliness



Fred Rogers spent his lifetime helping people understand what it means to be neighborly. Here are some of his messages that can help you as you create an event in your neighborhood and publicize it.

Appreciating our — and each other's — uniqueness

“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.”

Think of ways that allow **everyone** to know that his or her ideas and creations have value. Keep in mind that we discourage contests — because that singles out one or a few “winners.”

Encouraging generosity

“All of us, at some time or other, need help. Whether we're giving or receiving... each one of us has something valuable to bring to this world...”

While it may be tempting to promote an event (like the *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* Sweater Drive) as “bring something for the needy or less fortunate,” Fred Rogers was very clear in stating that people who bring items have needs, too, and those who receive them have strengths. It's better to say, “Bring things for people who need them but can't afford to buy them.”

Caring for the environment

“When we turn off lights, when we recycle, when we marvel at a flower, we are letting our children know that caring for our planet is important to us. Then those things are more likely to be important to them as well.”

Think of activities that are appropriate for young children – like recycling greeting cards or making playthings out of throwaways.

- Help children appreciate nature and the world around them.
- Make families aware of what your institution is doing to care for the environment.



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Fred Rogers' Approach to Neighborliness

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Valuing what children can do

"I think it helps children feel good about who they are when we adults put value on the many things children can do. It's a way for us to let them know that we don't want or expect them to be more grownup than they're ready to be – that we really do like them just the way they are."

- Try to provide activities that are appropriate for various age groups of children.
- For young children, process is more important than product. They're generally more interested in "doing" something than making "something" which looks like a finished product.
- Think of ways you can encourage children to be helpful in their own family — doing simple chores like setting the table or feeding a pet.
- You might want to encourage families to include children in being helpful to their real neighbors, like working at a soup kitchen together, helping to carry in groceries, or holding a door open for someone.
- Read books or tell stories about people who have helped others in their communities.

Offering positive role models

"Attitudes are caught, not taught" — a Quaker folk saying that was one of Fred Rogers' favorites.

Showcase people who love what they do and want to share it with children — your staff, artists, firefighters, chefs, scientists, engineers, etc. Their love of what they do is contagious! Sharing their interest is a way for them to be a caring neighbor, too.

Being a gracious receiver

"Thank you" is the most important phrase in any language."

Create opportunities for children and families to show, say, or make something as a way to express their thanks to others.





Promotion Ideas



BEFORE THE EVENT:

- Visit our website www.fci.org/neighbor for a poster, photos, logos and style guidelines.
- Link to our YouTube announcement to publicize the event. www.fci.org/neighbor.
- Use the Internet to post information about your event — your website, Youtube, Face Book, etc. Post stories of “random acts of kindness” or photos of your staff in sweaters (getting ready for the event). Encourage people to add their stories.
- Send promotional information through your mailing list or newsletter.
- Create in-house signage ahead of time so you can display it at least two weeks prior to the event – to get the “buzz” going with your staff and the community.
- Create a Press Release (See our Press Release Notes).
- Contact your local media.
- Have your town council proclaim March 20th as “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” Day.
- Take photos of celebrities in your area wearing a sweater and send them to the media as one way to promote “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” Day.
- Download the “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” Day poster www.fci.org/neighbor and customize it to fit your event.

PARTNERS IN PROMOTION

- Connect with your local chamber of commerce to make them aware of what you will be doing to celebrate “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” Day.
- Connect with local businesses to support your efforts. Ask them to donate goods and services – bakeries could donate food for refreshments, office supply stores could donate crayons, markers, and construction paper for craft projects. Working together can help create a caring community.

AFTER THE EVENT

Document your event for your own archives or for a marketing tool

- What did you do?
- What worked for you?
- What didn’t?
- How could you add to the event or enhance it next year?

Document your event for us by sending us any articles, photos, video clips or human interest stories. Also let us know if there’s something else we could have done to help you make it more successful.

- If you have good human interest stories or photos of people wearing sweaters, send them to your local media. They make great PR.
- Find ways to say “thank-you” to everyone who helped with the event.
Fred Rogers always said that “thank you” is the most important phrase in any language.

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Promotion Ideas

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PRESS RELEASE NOTES FOR "WON'T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR?" DAY

For press release materials visit our website www.fci.org/neighbor.

Why March 20th?

For more than 40 years on public television, Mister Rogers came through the door, changed to his sweater and sneakers with his invitation in song: "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" Our way of building on that legacy is to encourage everyone to wear a sweater and celebrate what it means to be a neighbor on his birthday, March 20th.

Fred Rogers dedicated his life to serving children through public television as creator, composer, writer, puppeteer and host of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*.

"Won't You Be My Neighbor?" (song lyrics)

It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood,
A beautiful day for a neighbor.
Would you be mine?
Could you be mine?
It's a neighborly day in this beauty wood,
A neighborly day for a beauty,
Would you be mine?
Could you be mine?
I have always wanted to have a neighbor just like you!
Always wanted live in a neighborhood with you.
So, let's make the most of this beautiful day,
Since we're together we might as well say,
Would be mine?
Could you be mine?
Won't you be my neighbor?
Won't you please, won't you please?
Please won't you be my neighbor?

His relentless commitment to all that is best in people led to an astonishing array of honors from the Lifetime Achievement Emmy Award to the Presidential Medal of Freedom. His innovative approach and sincere respect for his young viewers and their parents helped him become known as "America's favorite neighbor."

How did it begin?

"Won't You Be My Neighbor?" Day began as part of Pittsburgh's 250th anniversary celebration and was so successful, we're making it an annual national event.

"It started simply enough," recalls Margy Whitmer, Media Producer for Family Communications. "We wanted to recognize Fred Rogers' birthday on March 20th in a way that would reflect his deep appreciation of what it means to be a neighbor."

How can people participate?

"We're encouraging everyone everywhere to wear a sweater," says Media Producer for Family Communications, Margy Whitmer "It doesn't have to have a zipper down the front like the one Mister Rogers wore on the program...it just has to be one of *your* favorite sweaters."

Around the country, organizations like public TV stations, libraries, museums, and theaters are participating by creating their own events as a way to celebrate what it means to be a neighbor. (Describe yours in detail.)

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Promotion Ideas

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What is Family Communications?

Founded by Fred Rogers, Family Communications, Inc. is a non-profit company that creates a wide range of materials dedicated to young children, their families, and those who support them. From its roots as producer of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, it has expanded to design educational materials in many media that support healthy emotional, social and intellectual growth at all ages, and that embody the philosophy and values of Fred Rogers.

For more information visit our website www.fci.org.

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Family  Communications[®]

www.fci.org



Support Materials

We've put together a selected group of our Family Communications items that connect with the friendship and kindness themes of "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" Day. We're glad to offer them to you at a special 40% discount. Visit our website, www.fci.org and click on SHOP for descriptions and the full range of our products.

If you are interested in purchasing these items, shop online using the discount code on the check-out page. The code is `neighborday` (all one word) to be used only for organizations participating in "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" Day events. This offer begins March 1, 2009 and expires March 31, 2009.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN:

Making Friends
Speedy Delivery
A Piece of Red Paper
Josephine, the Short-Neck Giraffe
Extraordinary Friends

BOOKS FOR ADULTS:

The Mister Rogers' Plan & Play Book
You Are Special
Mini You Are Special Book
The Mister Rogers Parenting Book

MISCELLANEOUS:

The Giving Box
Track size trolley
Hand and finger puppets
Music CDs (*Bedtime, Coming and Going, You Are Special, You're Growing*)
DVDs (*Adventures in Friendship, A Day at the Circus, Going To School, What Do You Do with the Mad that You Feel?*)

