

Executive Director's Notes for April

"It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood.
A beautiful day for a neighbor,
Won't you be mine, Won't you be mine?"

When my sons were preschool age, they both looked forward to relaxing in front of the television and watching their friend, Mister Rogers - a gentle man who spoke in a calming voice. By using simple words and actions he taught young children about their feelings and the world around them. Fred Rogers believed that what "children most need to acquire in their early years is a feeling of self-worth and a positive outlook on the world."

By using simple and often handmade props, he showed children how to create their own tools and toys to be used in their imaginative and dramatic play. Instead of over stimulating children with loud music and fast paced action, Mister Rogers gave children the "gift of listening to them---carefully." "If we work at this kind of listening - active listening - we can learn a great deal about who our children are and what they need from us."

Another part of this careful listening concerns children and time. "Children like to take their time because they need to. It takes time for a child to learn to do the things that adults do so quickly - things like putting on boots, pouring juice without spilling it, and remembering to say thank you. Parents show respect for their children's individual rhythms of growth when they allow children as much time as they need to learn to 'do it right.' I believe that this respect can be kind of a legacy that our children will pass on to their children, just as our own parents passed it on to us."

"If you want to ride a bicycle,
and ride it straight and tall.
You can't simply sit and look at it,
'cause it won't move at all.
But it's you who have to try it,
And it's you who have to fall (sometimes).
You've got to do it,
Every little bit, you've got to do it.
Do it, do it, do it.
And when you're through,
You can know who did it,
For you did it, you did it, you did it.

Fred Rogers passed away several years ago, but his wise words are even more meaningful for families now. Today parents are often bombarded by advertising for the newest baby equipment, electronic toys, and classes to enhance their children's development. In the race to help their children be the best they can be, parents often forget that children also need the gift of time to explore their environment, enter into their

imaginary worlds, and to play by themselves or with friends in an unstructured setting. If you would like to discover such a child-friendly setting, please visit us at Parenting Place, Monday through Friday for our on-going, drop-in groups for parents/caregivers and their children.

PS Hope to see you on April 27th at the Millennium Hotel for our largest fundraiser of the year. A Night in Motown is a dinner dance featuring the Girls on Top Band and a live and silent auction. For tickets check out our website www.boulderparenting.org or call 303-449-0177 and ask for Gail or Fran.

Fondly, Fran